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**HISTORICAL ROOTS OF TERRORISM AND
CHALLENGES TO TURKEY'S TERRITORIAL
SOVEREIGNTY**

by

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September 2014

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TERRITORIAL SOVEREIGNTY**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the historical roots and significance of Turkey's decades-long struggle with terrorism. It argues that current perceptions of terrorism in Turkey are due to historical challenges to the country's territorial sovereignty. These challenges are rooted in the aborted Treaty of Sèvres at the end of World War I. Framed as a historical survey, this thesis concludes that terrorism in Turkey has been perceived as a threat to the territorial integrity of the state due to the legacy of territorial loss during the end of the Ottoman Empire and the nationalist separatist movements during the early Republican period. Although significantly different from early separatist movements, the threats posed by the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and the Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia (ASALA) have been interpreted as an outgrowth of the irredentism and imperialism embedded in the Treaty of Sèvres. As Turkey encounters new threats from religiously motivated terrorism, policymakers continue to view separatist terror as the foremost threat and a continuation of this historical trend.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AKP	Justice and Development Party
ARF	Armenian Revolutionary Federation
ASALA	Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia
ADYÖD	Ankara Democratic Higher Education Association
DHKP/C	Revolutionary People's Liberation Party/Front
DSP	Democratic Left Party
EMRO	External Macedonian Revolutionary Committee
ETA	Basque Homeland and Freedom
EU	European Union
HADEP	People's Democracy Party
İBDA-C	Great Eastern Islamic Raiders' Front
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
IMRO	Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization
IRA	Irish Republican Army
JCAG	Justice Commandos of the Armenian Genocide
KADEK	Congress for Freedom and Democracy in Kurdistan
KCK	Kurdistan Communities Union
KDP	Kurdistan Democratic Party (Iraq)
KONGRA-GEL	Congress of Kurdistan Public
KRG	Kurdistan Regional Government (Iraq)
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MİT	National Intelligence Organization
OHAL	Emergency Rule Law
PKK	Kurdistan Workers' Party
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organization
TKDP	Kurdistan Democratic Party of Turkey

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION

Terrorism in Turkey has historically been motivated by a complex blend of separatism, ideology, and religion. The Turkish counterterrorism apparatus has struggled to meet these threats, particularly from the ethnonationalist and separatist Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). Turkish terrorism is viewed as a threat due to the violent attacks with Turkish political rhetoric illustrating that perceptions are heavily predisposed toward framing terrorism as a challenge to the territorial integrity of the Turkish state. However, the relationship between the current perceptions of Turkish terrorism and counterterrorism and the transformative years of the Turkish Republic are not extensively documented or well understood. Historical contextualization of both the state counterterrorism policy and Turkish perceptions on terrorism may help explain Turkish views on domestic threats.

Given that Turkish counterterrorism policy frames domestic ethnonationalist and separatist threats as tantamount to encroachments upon Turkey's territorial integrity, important research questions arise: What are the historical roots of Turkey's framing of domestic threats? What are the implications of this framing on Turkey's ability to transcend domestic terrorism?

B. IMPORTANCE

Turkey is a geostrategically important country that garners worldwide praise in many areas: an emerging economic powerhouse, the second largest army in NATO, and a beacon of democratic stability in the Islamic world. Accompanying this global recognition, Turkey's claims to regional leadership continue to evolve. Turkey's foreign policy has recently signaled a neo-Ottoman trend that orients toward the non-Western world and regional neighbors.¹ As an influential state in a volatile region, both academics

¹ For a comparative analysis of Kemalist foreign policy and neo-Ottoman foreign policy, see Ömer Taşpınar, *Turkey's Middle East Policies: Between Neo-Ottomanism and Kemalism*, *Carnegie Papers* 10 (September 2008): 14-17; "A New Ottoman Empire?" *Forbes*, June 2, 2009.

and policymakers seek to glean tenets of Turkish strategy and policies and translate them to other states with seemingly similar experiences.² However, Turkish foreign policy remains aspirational, as many goals have not reach fruition.³

When surveying Turkey's dynamic potential, its decades-long struggle against domestic terrorism assumes great significance. While the PKK is Turkey's most infamous domestic terrorist group, many others have operated on Turkish territory.⁴ Decades of counterterrorism policies and recent political solutions have yet to quell the terrorist threat within Turkey. Terrorism remains a source of violence and continues to undermine outside perceptions of the country's commitments to civil rights (thus hindering Ankara's accession to the European Union). Furthermore, the Turkish struggle to combat these groups has stymied its regional authority and undermined Ankara's "Zero Problems with our Neighbors" foreign policy.⁵

This thesis contextualizes Turkey's views on domestic threats in an attempt to highlight how the current counterterrorism perceptions and reactions are informed by the historical legacy. It examines the challenges to Turkey's territorial sovereignty in order to illuminate the way these territorial anxieties undermine foreign policy interactions and to expose additional options for combating and pacifying terrorism within its borders. Lastly, it offers an overarching historical analysis of terrorism and provides insights into the fluctuating developments on religiously-motivated terrorism within Turkey and on its borders.

² After the 2011 Arab Spring, there was a wave of literature hailing Turkey as a "model" for Arab democracy. For further commentary, see Emel Parlar Dal, "The Transformation of Turkey's Relations with the Middle East: Illusion or Awakening?" *Turkish Studies* 13, no. 2 (2012): 245-267; Philip Robins, "Turkey's 'double gravity' predicament: the foreign policy of a newly activist power," *International Affairs* 89, no. 2 (March 2013): 381-397; Stathis N. Kalyvas, "The 'Turkish Model' in the Matrix of Political Catholicism," in *Democracy, Islam, & Secularism in Turkey*, eds. Ahmet T. Kuru and Alfred Stepan (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 189-192.

³ Sinan Ülgen, "From Inspiration to Aspiration: Turkey in the New Middle East," (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, December 2011).

⁴ Other groups include the Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia (ASALA), the Revolutionary People's Liberation Party/Front (DHKP/C), Kurdish Hizbollah, the Great Eastern Islamic Raiders' Front (İBDA-C), and al-Qaeda.

⁵ Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Policy of Zero Problems with our Neighbors," accessed August 22, 2014, <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/policy-of-zero-problems-with-our-neighbors.en.mfa>; Ahmet Davutoğlu, "Turkey's Zero-Problems Foreign Policy," *Foreign Policy*, May 20, 2010.

C. PROBLEMS AND HYPOTHESES

Understanding the challenges to Turkish sovereignty is a critical element to any study of Turkish approaches to and perceptions of terrorism. This thesis aims to determine the most influential variable impacting the historical roots of the territorial insecurities in counterterrorism policy and concludes that the terms and legacy of the Treaty of Sèvres is most important in the way Turkey frames domestic threats as a danger to its territorial integrity. Decades after the abrogation of the treaty, the proposed terms continue to impact the evolution of the Turkish national consciousness and the development of its security framework.⁶ In Turkey's quest to transcend domestic terrorism, the thesis takes into account the implications of this view on Turkish foreign policy relations and future challenges for Turkish counterterrorism policy, tactics, and priorities.

1. Counterterrorism Strategies

Primarily, the research addresses the implications of the historical dimension on past, current, and future approaches to counterterrorism in Turkey. Turkey's territorial anxieties have informed perspectives on terrorism since the establishment of the Turkish Republic. Although separatist violence dates back to the early Republican period, the Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia (ASALA) is the first modern separatist organization studied.⁷ In the initial wave of PKK terror in the late 1980s, Prime Minister Turgut Özal viewed terrorism as part of foreign conspiracies from Iraq and Iran to undermine Turkish authority.⁸ To combat this separatist menace, Turkey has employed a "whole of government" approach with diplomatic, economic, and cultural strategies. Despite the broad span of policies employed, the primary tool to fight terrorism has been

⁶ Dietrich Jung, "The Sèvres Syndrome: Turkish Foreign Policy and its Historical Legacies," http://www.unc.edu/depts/diplomat/archives_roll/2003_07-09/jung_Sèvres/jung_Sèvres.html.

⁷ Separatist violence existed in the early years of the Turkish Republic. One example is Xoybûn, the Kurdish nationalist organization that sought an independent Kurdish state. Xoybûn was responsible for launching the Ağrı Rebellion from 1927 until 1930, and it was subsequently crushed by the Turkish military. For more information, see Söner Çağaptay, *Islam, Secularism, and Nationalism in Modern Turkey: Who is a Turk?* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 38-39; Celadet Alî Bedirxan, "The Kurdish Question, its Origins and Causes," in *Modernism: Representations of National Culture*, eds. Ahmet Ersoy, Maciej Górny, and Vangelis Kechriotis (New York: CEU Press, 2010), 343-350.

⁸ "Turkish Prime Minister on Terrorist Incidents in Anatolia," *BBC*, October 19, 1984.

raw military force.⁹ Instead of viewing ASALA and the PKK within the context of nationalism and advocacy for cultural rights, any concessions or autonomy allowed to ethnic minorities is viewed as weakening Turkish territorial integrity.

Quite different from the PKK and ASALA attacks of the last decades of 20th century, the beginning of the twenty-first century has seen small-scale attacks loosely connected to al-Qaeda and religiously-motivated groups attacking Western targets within Turkey. The most significant attacks occurred in November 2003 with truck bombings targeting synagogues, the British Consulate (killing the counsel general), and a branch of the London-based HSBC Bank.¹⁰ Other al-Qaeda attacks succeeded, but the majority of attacks were foiled in the planning stages.¹¹ When viewed in the context of its neighbors or the larger Middle East, these small-scale attacks could suggest a worrisome trend. However, I argue that domestic separatist terrorism is still perceived as the most significant threat to Turkey and that Turkey's counterterrorism strategy is rooted to a large degree in the historical apprehensions crystallized in the signing of the Treaty of Sèvres.

2. Foreign Policy Implications

Secondarily, I argue that Turkey's perception that domestic threats from minority groups are territorial challenges undermines Turkish foreign policy priorities. Turkey's reaction to domestic minority politics manifests in its hypersensitivity to regional or nationalist politics. Therefore, aspects of Turkey's foreign policy may be influenced by its experience with domestic terrorism. Ankara's militarized approach toward these issues is illustrated by Turkey's historic penchant to become involved in unnecessary conflicts with its neighbors in the name of protecting its sovereignty. After years of progress, the resurgence of PKK attacks and conflicts in Kurdish-populated Iraq and Syria have caused

⁹ Alan Cowell, "Turkey Opts for Raw Force in Fight Against Kurds," *New York Times*, September 7, 1992; Audrey Kurth Cronin, *How Terrorism Ends: Understanding the Decline and Demise of Terrorist Campaigns* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 128-9

¹⁰ Craig S. Smith, "Explosions in Istanbul Destroy British Consulate and Bank; At Least 27 Killed, 400 Injured," *New York Times*, November 20, 2003.

¹¹ Karen Hodgson, "The al Qaeda Threat in Turkey," *Long War Journal*, July 8, 2013.

Turkey to forcefully reassert its territorial sovereignty.¹² In recent years, Turkish policy toward Iran has wavered between cooperation and conflict on Kurdish issues and combating the PKK.¹³ Politicians in Ankara have asserted that Iran supports the PKK through tacit acceptance of training camps on its territory and uses the PKK to promote its own foreign policy aims.¹⁴ These trends indicate the degree to which domestic minority politics assumes critical importance to Turkey's understanding of its regional environment.

D. LITERATURE REVIEW

The historical roots of Turkey's counterterrorism policy are addressed to various degrees in a series of different fields: terrorism studies, Ottoman and Republican history, and Turkish international relations. While there is an emerging field of literature analyzing modern Turkish history and a robust set of literature analyzing all aspects of Turkish domestic terrorism, there are few studies that directly link the legacy of the Treaty of Sèvres with Turkish counterterrorism policies and explore the implications. Furthermore, few sources consider the impact of Turkey's Ottoman past upon its modern counterterrorism policies. For the purposes of this thesis, the literature is divided into three groups: literature that addresses terrorism and counterterrorism in Turkey, literature that considers the importance of the Treaty of Sèvres, and literature that directly deals with the manifestations of the Sèvres Syndrome in Turkish foreign policy.

¹² "Turkish jets bomb PKK bases in Iraq," *Hürriyet Daily News*, August 18, 2011; "Erdoğan says PKK threat from Syria may prompt Turkish military retaliation," *Today's Zaman*, July 25, 2012.

¹³ For example, in 2010 Turkey and Iran agreed to coordinate on intelligence in order to protect their borders. This cooperation was short-lived and it ended in 2011, coinciding with a strain in relations due to the Syrian conflict. For more information on the history of Turkish-Iranian relations see F. Stephen Larrabee and Alireza Nader, "Turkish-Iranian Relations in a Changing Middle East," *RAND National Defense Research Institute* (2013); Henri J. Barkey, "Turkish-Iranian Competition after the Arab Spring," *Survival* 54, no. 6 (2012): 139-162; Graham E. Fuller, *The New Turkish Republic: Turkey as a Pivotal State in the Muslim World* (Washington DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2008), 107-114.

¹⁴ Stephen J. Flanagan, "The Turkey-Russia-Iran Nexus: Eurasian Power Dynamics," *The Washington Quarterly* 36, no. 1 (2013): 171; Nur Bilge Criss, "The nature of PKK terrorism in Turkey," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 18, no. 1 (2008): 30-32.

1. Terrorism and Counterterrorism in Turkey

The existing works on Turkish terrorism narrowly focus on the group objectives or state responses to terrorism and make only minor connections to the historical roots of Turkish terrorism and counterterrorism.

It is important to note that the main body of literature on Turkish terrorism almost exclusively studies the PKK. A collective survey of secondary research on the PKK reveals several major trends. First, the authors tend to approach terrorism from a practitioner's point of view, undertaking functional topics such as ethnicity, militancy, and illicit network funding, and tactics such as suicide terrorism.¹⁵ There is also a dedicated field of literature analyzing and making recommendations on the end of the PKK.¹⁶ Since the literature on the PKK is from the topical rather than historical perspective, there is a tendency to isolate the variables and not include PKK terrorism within the historical continuum of suppressed separatist threats from minorities.

The overemphasis on Kurdish terrorism means that there is relatively little literature on non-ethnic terrorism in Turkey. The literature on groups such as the Revolutionary People's Liberation Party/Front (DHKP/C), Kurdish Hizbollah, the Great Eastern Islamic Raiders' Front (İBDA-C), and al-Qaeda operations in Turkey exists, but is limited.¹⁷ Contrasted to the literature on the PKK, the literature on leftist and Islamist groups overwhelmingly frames terrorism in Turkey in relation to the global war on terror. The most authoritative and encompassing work in this field is Andrew Mango's *Turkey*

¹⁵ The literature is broad, but see the following articles among others: Andre Barrinha, "The political importance of labeling: terrorism and Turkey's discourse on the PKK," *Critical Studies on Terrorism* 4, no. 2 (2011); Mitchel P. Roth, et al., "The Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) as Criminal Syndicate: Funding Terrorism through Organized Crime, A Case Study," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 30, no. 10 (2007); Robert Pape, *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism* (New York: Random House Publishing Group, 2005), 162-66.

¹⁶ Cengiz Çandar, "Leaving the mountain: How may the PKK lay down arms? Freeing the Kurdish Question from violence," *TESEV Publications* (2012).

¹⁷ Anat Kurz and Ariel Merari, *ASALA: Irrational Terror or Political Tool*, Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies (1985); M. Alper Sozer and Murat Sever, "Violent Extremism in Terrorist Organizations: The Case of Turkish Hizbullah," in I. Bal, S. Ozeren, and M.A. Sozer (eds.), *Multi-Faceted Approach to Radicalization in Terrorist Organizations*, IOS Press (2011); Ian O. Lesser, "Turkey: Receded Islamic Politics and Convergence with the West," in "The Muslim World after 9/11," *RAND Project Air Force* (2004): 193-5; Olga Khazan, "Turkey Bombing: What Is the DHKP/C Terrorist Group?" *Washington Post*, February 1, 2013; Hodgson, "The al Qaeda Threat in Turkey."

and the War on Terror: For Forty Years We Fought Alone. This historical work provides some background on Islamic-inspired extremists during the Ottoman Empire, with the main focus on Turkish counterterrorism strategies within the context of the global war on terror. Mango argues that although Turkey has been the target of terrorism since the 1960s, the global war on terror provided the international community an opportunity to engage Turkey in worldwide efforts to combat terrorism. The disinterest of the West, however, allowed Turkey to pursue its own distorted perceptions of counterterrorism with few checks.¹⁸

Within the general literature on counterterrorism, analysis of Turkish counterterrorism policies typically falls into two camps. Some studies focus upon the political motivations and goals of the terrorists in order to better inform counterterrorism strategies.¹⁹ Other studies focus on the effectiveness of the government's responses, behavior, and policies toward the terrorist group—a body of literature that has grown since 2001.²⁰ Mustafa Coşar Ünal's research, to take one example, bridges both tendencies. His work contends with the effectiveness of Turkish counterterrorism policies and argues that repressive techniques, although favored by states, tend to be the least effective. Instead, he contends that policies that address the legitimate grievances of the terrorists will instead garner public support and undermine the terrorists.²¹

For the purposes of this study, the literature on separatist and ethnonationalist terrorism provides context for threats to Turkey's territorial sovereignty. Although the PKK has Marxist-Leninist roots, it is perceived by the Turkish government to be a separatist and nationalist group. Since much of the literature does not differentiate

¹⁸ Andrew Mango, *Turkey and the War on Terror: For Forty Years We Fought Alone* (New York: Routledge, 2005).

¹⁹ Max Abrahms, "What Terrorists Really Want: Terrorist Motives and Counterterrorism Strategy," *International Security* 32, no. 4 (Spring 2008): 78-105; Ethan Bueno de Mesquita and Eric S. Dickson, "The Propaganda of the Deed: Terrorism, Counterterrorism, and Mobilization," *American Journal of Political Science* 51, no. 2 (April 2007): 364-81.

²⁰ Bruce Hoffman, "Rethinking terrorism and counterterrorism since 9/11," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* (2002); Yonah Alexander, ed. *Counterterrorism Strategies: Successes and Failures of Six Nations* (New York: Potomac Books, 2006).

²¹ Mustafa Coşar Ünal, *Counterterrorism in Turkey: Policy choices and policy effects towards the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK)*, (New York: Routledge, 2012).

between separatist and ethnonationalist groups, this thesis will study them in conjunction.²² In his analytical foundation for the study of terrorism, Bruce Hoffman groups together “ethnonationalist/separatist” terrorism to include groups such as the Basque Homeland and Freedom group (ETA), Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), Irish Republican Army (IRA), and the PKK. He argues that the ethnonationalist/separatist groups decline as nations gain sovereignty, resulting in less credibility for international terrorism as a tactic.²³ Furthermore, literature on separatist terrorism is typically presented from the comparative perspective in order to draw conclusions on group motivations or counterterrorism policies.²⁴

Most relevant for this thesis, there is a small field of literature that discusses Turkish terrorism and counterterrorism in a broad historical perspective. This literature traces terrorism and counterterrorism back to Ottoman-era domestic insurgent threats, mainly from minority groups. Since many of these insurgencies garnered foreign support and some resulted in territorial loss, this literature provides a historical basis for studying terrorism in Turkey within the context of the challenges to territorial integrity. Additionally, the literature highlights how the early experience with separatist groups was the catalyst for Ottoman development of counterinsurgency practices and policies that can be traced to contemporary counterterrorism policies.²⁵

Most of the general literature on Turkish terrorism and counterterrorism policy is narrow in historical scope and does not directly take the Treaty of Sèvres into account.²⁶ Instead, the literature highlights the domestic threats and challenges to Turkish

²² Alex P. Schmid, ed., *The Routledge Handbook of Terrorism Research* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 170; 665.

²³ Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 85; 230; 268.

²⁴ Erkin Özlen, —Comparative Experiences of Three Countries against Separatist Terrorism: Turkey, Spain, the UK,” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 1, no. 4 (2009).

²⁵ Ryan Gingeras, —The Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization: ‘Oriental’ Terrorism, Counterinsurgency, and the End of the Ottoman Empire,” *Oxford Handbooks Online* (February 2014); Edward J. Erickson, *Ottomans and Armenians: A Study in Counterinsurgency* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

²⁶ Ünal, *Counterterrorism in Turkey*; Criss, —The nature of PKK terrorism in Turkey”; Andrew Mango, *Turkey and the War on Terror: For Forty Years We Fought Alone* (New York: Routledge, 2005); Michael M. Gunter, —Adullah Ocalan: ‘We are Fighting Turks Everywhere,’” *Middle East Quarterly* 5, no. 2 (June 1998).

sovereignty but does not utilize the Treaty of Sèvres as evidence. One example is Audrey Kurth Cronin's study on the demise of terrorist organizations. She highlights how Turkey views PKK terrorism not just in terms of the threat of violence, but also in the historical context of external actors interfering in internal affairs. This work focuses on the funding and training of the PKK by neighboring states, but does not connect the territorial anxieties to the foundation of the Republic and the Treaty of Sèvres.²⁷ Since the literature on terrorism does not deal with the Treaty of Sèvres and the Sèvres Syndrome directly, I analyze the literature to provide a larger historical context to Turkey's territorial anxieties and perceptions of terrorism. Repurposing the literature in this way allows me to illustrate how the territorial anxieties caused by the Sèvres Syndrome affects the study of terrorism in Turkey.

2. Modern Turkish History and the Treaty of Sèvres

The perceptions of Turkish terrorism and counterterrorism must be put in context of the Turkish historical accounts on territorial sovereignty. Historiography from both the Ottoman era and after the foundation of the Turkish Republic is relevant for this study. The Ottoman historiography is germane because it provides background material and context for the domestic and international issues that led to the creation of the Republic. More specifically, the historical literature can be used as a point of reference for the issues raised in this thesis including Ankara's apprehensions toward foreign interference, the contextualization of minority policies—particularly the Kurds—and responses to separatism and terrorism.²⁸

Within the body of Turkish historical literature, the Treaty of Sèvres is at the core of studying the territorial anxieties present in modern Turkish history. The Treaty of Sèvres was a peace treaty at the end of World War I signed between the Ottoman Sultan

²⁷ Audrey Kurth Cronin, *How Terrorism Ends: Understanding the Decline and Demise of Terrorist Campaigns* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 128-29.

²⁸ For renowned historical accounts dealing with these issues, see Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, Third Edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); Erik J. Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2009). Other works include Carter Vaughn Findley, *Turkey, Islam, Nationalism, and Modernity: A History* (New York: Yale University Press, 2011); Stephen Kinzer, *Crescent and Star: Turkey Between Two Worlds* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008).

and the Allied powers on August 10, 1920. The treaty reduced the size of the Ottoman Empire to one third of its territory in terms more punitive than those assigned to the Germany Empire in the Treaty of Versailles. The revised borders would have reduced the Ottoman Empire to a small piece of northern Asia Minor with Istanbul as the capital, created an independent Kurdish and Armenian state on Ottoman territory, and partitioned the area of Eastern Thrace to Greece. The Treaty of Sèvres was never implemented because a group of Turkish nationalists, led by Mustafa Kemal, rejected the treaty outright and launched the War of Independence. The victory of Kemal's troops led to the Allied government's recognition of Turkish sovereignty with the implementation of the Treaty of Lausanne.²⁹

While it may seem like a historical nuance, the leading accounts on modern Turkish history extensively document the Treaty of Sèvres.³⁰ The literature highlights the treaty's two main psychological impacts: the way Turks view their territorial integrity and the historical interactions with minorities. First, Mustafa Kemal's ability to render Sèvres obsolete secured his legacy as the protector of Turkish territorial integrity in the minds of scholars. The harsh realities of the Treaty of Sèvres map provide a glimpse of the counterfactual and serve as an explanation for the way Turks view their territorial integrity.³¹ Moreover, there is wide-ranging consensus in the literature that the leaders of the young Republic, policymakers in Turkey, and historians view the Treaty of Sèvres as the culmination of the separatist movements plaguing the Ottoman Empire. The literature documents the seriousness of separatist threats from minorities during the Ottoman Empire, which is relevant to the way Turks interact with minorities.³²

²⁹ "The Treaty of Sèvres, 1920," in *The Treaties of Peace 1919-1923, Vol. II*, ed. John Reed (New York: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1924); Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, 147.

³⁰ Erik J. Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2009); Stanford J. Shaw and Ezel Kural Shaw, *The Rise of Modern Turkey 1808-1975 Volume II* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977); Andrew Mango, *From the Sultan to Atatürk: Turkey: The Peace Conferences of 1919-23 and Their Aftermath* (New York: Haus Publishing, 2010); Paul C. Helmreich, *From Paris to Sèvres: The Partition of the Ottoman Empire at the Peace Conference of 1919-1920* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1974).

³¹ Helmreich, *From Paris to Sèvres*, 314-32.

³² Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, 93-133, Donald Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire 1700-1922* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 54-71.

Furthermore, there is no sweeping or in-depth study of the historical impact of the so-called Sèvres Syndrome. Fatma Müge Göçek's recent book on the Ottoman legacy in modern Turkey faces the Syndrome head-on and that provides an in-depth account of the legacy of the Treaty of Sèvres. She also affords the most precise definition of the Sèvres Syndrome: the –Sèvres syndrome refers to those individuals, groups or institutions in Turkey who interpret all public interactions—domestic and foreign—through a framework of fear and anxiety over the possible annihilation, abandonment or betrayal of the Turkish state by the West.”³³ Using an impeccable comparative analysis of the Sèvres Syndrome to the dehistoricization and the mythologization, Göçek focuses on the military as the key institution carrying the Sèvres Syndrome forward. Although the military plays a large role in the counterterrorism policy, a full analysis is outside the scope of this thesis. Other evaluations of the Sèvres Syndrome touch on domestic and foreign policy, as well analysis on whether Turkey will be able to overcome its Sèvres legacy.³⁴ This work provides an important foundation and basis for applications of the Sèvres Syndrome to other areas of literature and the questions raised in this thesis.

3. The Sèvres Syndrome in Turkish Foreign Policy

In order to study how the Turkish state frames domestic threats from a historical perspective, this thesis will consider the literature on the basis and evolution of Turkish foreign policy.³⁵ Unlike the historical literature, the foreign policy literature is generally based on Kemalist-era foundations rather than Ottoman period trends. Much of the

³³ Fatma Müge Göçek, *The Transformation of Turkey: Redefining the State and Society from the Ottoman Empire to the Modern Era* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2011), 99.

³⁴ Dietrich Jung, –The Sèvres Syndrome: Turkish Foreign Policy and its Historical Legacies,” http://www.unc.edu/depts/diplomat/archives_roll/2003_07-09/jung_Sèvres/jung_Sèvres.html; Levon Hovsepyan, –The Fears of Turkey: The Sèvres Syndrome,” *Information and Public Relation Center* (2012); Michelangelo Guida, –The Sèvres Syndrome and ‘Komplot’ Theories in the Islamist and Secular Press,” *Turkish Studies* 9, no. 1 (2008).

³⁵ For an overview of literature on Turkish foreign policy, see William Hale, *Turkish Foreign Policy, 1774-2000* Third Edition (New York: Routledge, 2012); Fuller, *The New Turkish Republic*; Philip Robins, *Suits and Uniforms: Turkish Foreign Policy Since the Cold War* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2003); Michael S. Radu, ed., *Dangerous Neighborhood: Contemporary Issues in Turkey's Foreign Relations* (New Brunswick: Foreign Policy Research Institute, 2003); Söner Çağaptay, *The Rise of Turkey: The Twenty-First Century's First Muslim Power* (New York: University of Nebraska Press, 2014). For official statements on Turkish foreign policy, see the Republic of Turkey's Ministry of Foreign Affairs at <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/default.en.mfa>.

literature concludes that Turkey acts as a “realist” state in its narrow view of national security. Unfortunately, the literature lacks the necessary international relations comparative and theoretical analysis.³⁶ This truncated and compartmentalized view of foreign policy provides a limited scope of the historical roots of Turkish terrorism.

At the domestic level, the literature illustrates that Turkish foreign policy tends to be a response to the Treaty of Sèvres conditions evident in the post-Ottoman past. Turkish policymakers use the treaty’s conditions to affirm their domestic and international beliefs and to justify their policy positions. The literature encapsulates the ingrained Turkish hostility and skepticism of power politics, from Turkish neutrality in World War II to non-intervention in the 2003 invasion of Iraq.³⁷ Furthermore, manifestations of the Sèvres Syndrome are evident in the literature on two main Turkish anxieties: fears of Western intervention and fears of intervention from states with Kurdish populations.

First, the literature highlights fears of Western intervention, particularly from European states with Kurdish diasporas. Many policymakers respond to the institutionalized fear that domestic struggles are the product of foreign complicity and a conspiracy of powerful states to violate Turkey’s territorial sovereignty. In one work, Emrullah Uslu and Onder Aytac highlight how the legacy of the Treaty of Sèvres influences Ankara’s perception of EU support for Kurdish political and cultural rights. The legacy has affected Turkish relations with European states, with some Turkish intellectuals and policymakers believing that the European Union (EU) supports Kurdish

³⁶ For realist interpretations, see Ebru Canan-Sokullu, ed. *Debating Security in Turkey: Challenges and Changes in the Twenty-First Century* (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2013); Emrullah Uslu and Onder Aytac, “War of Paradigms: the PKK, Europe, and Turkey,” in *Understanding and Responding to the Terrorism Phenomenon*, eds. O. Nikbay and S. Hancerli (2007); Faruk Yalvaç, “Strategic Depth of Hegemonic Depth? A Critical Realist Analysis of Turkey’s Position in the World System,” *International Relations* 26, no. 2 (June 2012). The limited literature on other international relations theories focuses on narrow fields including economics, democracy, and religion.

³⁷ Robins, *Suits and Uniforms*; Sabri Sayari, “Turkish Foreign Policy in the Post-Cold War Era: The Challenges of Multi-Regionalism,” *Journal of International Affairs* 54, no. 1 (Fall 2000); Ian O. Lesser, “Bridge or Barrier? Turkey and the West After the Cold War,” *RAND* (1992).

rights. One example is the belief that a pro-PKK TV channel broadcast from England was part of a larger plot to dismember Turkey.³⁸

In regard to the literature on regional intervention from states with Kurdish populations, the focus rests on Kurdish self-determination and the claims of neighboring states on Turkish territory.³⁹ Turkish foreign policy in the Middle East is influenced by the perception of being “encircled by enemies” as part of a foreign conspiracy that targets the territorial integrity of the Turkish state.⁴⁰ This mentality has influenced its relations with neighboring states as the lines between internal and external threats become blurred. Turkish relations with states with Kurdish populations—Syria, Iraq, and Iran—vary between conflict and cooperation. Turkey sees these states as interfering in their domestic affairs through support of the Kurds.⁴¹ Commentaries on Turkish foreign policy tend to emphasize the Treaty of Sèvres with respect to Kurdish self-determination. The autonomous Kurdistan allocated in the Treaty of Sèvres provides the basis for Kurdish nationalism to be perceived as the resurrection of the Ottoman Empire’s territorial dismemberment.⁴² Furthermore, the legacy of Sèvres influences relations with states that lay claim to Turkish territory, including Syria’s continuing claims on Turkey’s Hatay Province.⁴³

E. METHODS AND SOURCES

This thesis is a historical analysis that studies the ways in which Turkish counterterrorism policy frames domestic terrorism as a challenge to territorial integrity. A study of the Turkish experience, views of the Treaty of Sèvres, and the evolution of the

³⁸ Uslu and Aytac, “War of Paradigms,” 129-32.

³⁹ Nur Bilge Criss and Yavuz Turan Çetiner, “Terrorism and the Issue of International Cooperation,” *The Journal of Conflict Studies* 20, no. 1 (Spring 2000).

⁴⁰ Senior Turkish politicians and policymakers have made statements of this nature, see Dietrich Jung, “The Sèvres Syndrome: Turkish Foreign Policy and its Historical Legacies.”

⁴¹ For more information on how Turkey’s neighbors manipulate the Kurdish issue for their gain, see Nur Bilge Criss, “The nature of PKK terrorism in Turkey,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 18, no. 1 (2008): 30-34.

⁴² Ömer Taşpınar, *Kurdish Nationalism and Political Islam in Turkey: Kemalist Identity in Transition* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 191.

⁴³ For an overview of the Turkish-Syrian dispute of Hatay Province, see Çağaptay, *Islam, Secularism, and Nationalism in Modern Turkey*, 116-21.

Sèvres Syndrome provides historical contextualization for the evidence of this framing in Turkish counterterrorism policy and foreign policy. The sources analyzed are primarily monographs, peer-reviewed journal articles, and newspaper articles. The majority of these secondary sources can be found in English, as many Turkish academics publish their works in English-language books and journals. English-language websites of Turkish newspapers, most notably the socially liberal *Hürriyet Daily News* and the more Islamic and conservative *Today's Zaman*, will provide press accounts and illustrate shifts in the Sèvres Syndrome and the relation to terrorism. Furthermore, primary sources of speeches by Turkish and international government officials will be utilized to provide context on how they discuss terrorism in respect to territorial sovereignty. Specifically relevant are statements from the Republic of Turkey's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and publically-available statements from officials in the Turkish military and executive branch.

F. THESIS OVERVIEW

To provide readers with a historical basis for Turkey's territorial insecurities, Chapter II will present a brief history on the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and the importance of the Treaty of Sèvres to the foundation of the Republic. This section will explore how the Republic of Turkey was shaped through territorial claims settled by war, and examine the themes of provincial legitimacy and territorial insecurities. The next chapter will provide an overview of early terrorism within Turkey and the initial state responses. The two main terrorist groups surveyed will be ASALA and the PKK within the scope of their territorial claims and threats to the Turkish state. Last, the thesis will explore Turkish policymakers' perceptions of post-1999 Kurdish terrorism and religiously-motivated terrorism to study the impact of historical contextualization in the twenty-first century. I will focus specifically on how the previously outlined historical variables and trends continue to impact the way Turkey frames the terrorism threat.

II. TURKEY'S TERRITORIAL INSECURITIES

A. INTRODUCTION

Turkey's imperial past and struggle for territorial sovereignty permeates every layer of its domestic and foreign relations. Established in 1923, the Republic of Turkey is a young nation drawn from the territory of the Ottoman Empire. After over six hundred years of Ottoman rule, the empire's dissolution left Turkey's territorial borders uncertain. In order to oust the foreign occupation of the Allied powers after World War I and define its new borders, Turkish nationalists waged and won the War of Independence. The period ranging from the slow decay of the Ottoman Empire to the establishment of the Republic of Turkey was a formative historical experience that plays a vital role in contemporary Turkish politics and society.

Almost a century after the end of World War I, the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, and the Turkish War of Independence, Turkey is an established state and has emerged as a regional power. Out of the post-World War I settlements, the Treaty of Lausanne was the only agreement that produced lasting borders and peace that withstood the challenge of World War II, although it has not survived entirely unchanged.⁴⁴ Still, there is a pervasive belief among policymakers and the public that the state's territorial integrity is fragile and under attack. This thesis raises critical questions: How were the borders initially framed and defined in the post-Ottoman era? What were the drivers for Turkish territorial claims? Why does the Treaty of Sèvres matter to the way Turkey views its borders and its lasting territorial anxieties? How does the settlement of post-Lausanne territorial questions shape definition of the borders? I argue that these territorial anxieties are a direct reaction to the territorial loss and separatist rebellion that occurred during the retraction of the Ottoman Empire throughout the twentieth century. Further, this chapter argues that the Republic of Turkey conceptualization of its borders began in 1920 with the *Misak-i Milli* (National Pact) and the intersection with the Treaty of Sèvres serves as the point of reference for the way Turkey views its national borders.

⁴⁴ Mango, *From the Sultan to Atatürk*, 172. Although the Treaty of Lausanne endured, the border disputes regarding Hatay illustrate that treaty has evolved and undergone modifications.

This chapter will first outline the Ottoman Empire's experience with territorial loss and separatism during the terminating years of the empire. The territorial retraction from foreign incursion coupled with internal rebellion from minority groups led late Ottoman and early Turkish leaders to view the borders as a critical political issue. Second, it will consider the territorial claims and challenges the Turkish nationalist leaders made during World War I through the establishment of the Republic. The claims were an expansive interpretation of territorial sovereignty, influenced by Wilsonian views of self-determination and institutionalized in the National Pact. Next, the reaction to the punitive terms of the Treaty of Sèvres shaped the new Republic's response to territorial questions that were not settled in the Treaty of Lausanne and this section will discuss the territorial disputes from 1923-1938. Throughout this period, we see the development of an ardent nationalist and insecure politics forming around the limits of Turkey's borders. Last, this chapter will illustrate how these competing forces have transformed into the Sèvres Syndrome which influences the way Turkey views domestic and foreign issues.

B. TERRITORIAL LOSS IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

The rise and fall of the Ottoman Empire can be illustrated in territorial terms. The Empire reached the peak of its territorial expansion in the seventeenth century, but Ottoman conquest was not halted by territorial satiation; instead, it reached impenetrable empires. In the east, the Safavid dynasty in Iran halted Ottoman expansion into Persia, Central Asia, and India. To the northeast, Russia halted Turkish expansion in Crimea with their control over the Black Sea and the North Caucasus. The desert of Africa to the south posed a geographic challenge of terrain and climate that offered little gains. The Ottomans had achieved limited gains to the west in Europe, and in 1683, the Ottoman army was defeated after reaching the gates of Vienna.⁴⁵

Bernard Lewis argues that the territorial retraction of the Ottoman Empire was due to the confrontation with the "closing of the frontier." The Ottoman political, military, and economic systems were designed to expand territorially into non-Muslim lands through colonization or war. Once the Ottoman territory had reached these

⁴⁵ Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, 24-25.

impenetrable boundaries due to the geographic challenges or strong imperial neighbors, the empire began its centuries of decline and territorial retraction.⁴⁶ The empire underwent a change from the meticulous, conscientious, and strikingly efficient bureaucratic government of the sixteenth century to the neglect of the seventeenth and the collapse of the eighteenth centuries.”⁴⁷ Challenges in agriculture, fiscal stability, a large standing army, an oversized and overpaid bureaucratic structure, and the lack of technological modernization compared to European adversaries led to internal unrest and the loss of territory. The way Ottoman policymakers and Turkish historians viewed their borders was formed from centuries of territorial loss spurred by separatist movements from ethnic groups within the empire and external imperial claims on territory within Ottoman borders.

1. Legacy of Territorial Loss

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, territorial loss was a result of external threats from regional neighbors. Following a series of wars with other great powers such as the Habsburg Empire and Russian Empire, a sequence of treaties led to the partition of Ottoman lands. By the end of the nineteenth century, the once great empire with expansive territory had transformed into the “sick man of Europe” that was at the mercy of European powers.⁴⁸ This reduction of territory influenced how late Ottoman and early Turkish policy makers defined its borders and defended its sovereignty from foreign influence in the early years of the Republic.

The Ottoman defeat at the gates of Vienna in 1683 was a significant turning point as the first time the Ottoman Empire was forced to cede territory to the victor. Following the Austrian advancement into Ottoman territory, the Ottomans and Austrians signed the Treaty of Karlowitz in 1699, which ceded Hungary, Transylvania, and Slavonia to Austria.⁴⁹ Another major territorial loss occurred with the Ottoman defeat in the Russo-

⁴⁶ Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, 26-27.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 23.

⁴⁸ Jung, “The Sèvres Syndrome,” 5.

⁴⁹ Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, 36.

Turkish War and the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca in 1774. Not only was there the loss of annexed Christian land, but the Ottoman Empire also forfeited historically Muslim land in Crimea and provided the Russian Empire with its first warm water port in the Black Sea. In addition to territorial losses, the Ottoman Empire also suffered a moral blow since the treaty provided the Russian Empire the right to protect Orthodox Christians. This treaty led to much “heart-searching and discussion” from contemporary Ottoman statesmen and historians on the future of the Ottoman Empire, particularly the Eastern Question: why is the Ottoman Empire in decline?⁵⁰

Historically, Europe dodged the Eastern Question by propping up the Ottoman Empire as a balance of power strategy. By the late nineteenth century, it was no longer in Europe’s interest to use the Ottoman Empire as a tool against Russian hegemony and the Ottomans suffered catastrophic territorial loss. The Treaty of San Stefano after the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–1878 created an autonomous Bulgarian state of Eastern Rumelia, an autonomous area in Thrace, and afforded territory to the independent states of Serbia, Montenegro, and Romania. San Stefano was ultimately overturned by the Treaty of Berlin due to the balance of power concerns from European powers against the Russian Empire. The gains made by the newly liberated states were smaller, but still constituted significant losses to the Ottoman Empire as foreign powers began to exert influence within the Ottoman Empire with foreign occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Cyprus. Furthermore, the Treaty of Berlin was a major turning point for Ottoman territorial loss; the empire lost approximately one third of its territory and twenty percent of the population. As seen previously to a limited extent, these losses constituted historically Ottoman territory instead of territory gained from conquest of European Christian states.⁵¹

Foreign powers also exerted influence over Ottoman provinces and capitalized on the separatist movements to intrude on Ottoman territory. In 1912, Austria-Hungary formally annexed the Ottoman provinces of Bosnia and Herzegovina—territory it had occupied since 1876. Other examples included Bulgaria formally annexing Eastern

⁵⁰ Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, 37-38.

⁵¹ Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, 74-80.

Rumelia; Greece annexing Crete; and Italy successfully invading Ottoman provinces in Africa, ending Ottoman rule on the continent.⁵² Without foreign power intervention on behalf of the Ottomans, there was little they could do to counter rival powers. Territorial loss can also be tied back to foreign influence due to international partition plans. The 1916 Sykes-Picot agreement divided the majority of Ottoman territory into Allied spheres of influence and areas of direct control. The Russians gained control of Turkey's Black Sea and eastern Anatolia; the Italians, southwestern Anatolia; the French, a territory from Palestine to southern Anatolia including the Syrian coast; and Britain, southern Iraq and areas of Persia.⁵³ By the onset of the Turkish War of Independence, territorial claims from Russia, Britain, France, Italy, Greece, Armenia, and the Kurds threatened to entirely eliminate Turkey from the geopolitical landscape.⁵⁴

2. Legacy of Separatism

The Ottoman Empire was a heterogeneous, multicultural state with a long history of internal rebellions originating from minority ethnic and religious groups. The territorial loss from the aforementioned treaties weakened the central authority of the state, which led to internal opposition to Ottoman rule. The historical basis of separatist threats from the ethnic minorities is considerably relevant to the contemporary way that Turks interact with minorities, as will be illustrated in later chapters.⁵⁵ These rebellions influenced how late Ottoman and early Turkish policy makers viewed the question of borders as a political issue.

The historical motivations for minority separatism varied. Early rebellion and separatism in the Ottoman Empire was spurred by opportunism rather than principled opposition to Ottoman rule. Local leaders in areas such as Arabia, Lebanon, and Kurdistan were not drawn from the Ottoman or Mamluk elite classes, and used rebellion against the state as a tool to increase their personal revenue and power in their

⁵² Mango, *From the Sultan to Ataturk*, 5.

⁵³ Ibid., 54-55.

⁵⁴ Jung, "The Sèvres Syndrome," 6.

⁵⁵ Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, 93-133; Donald Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire 1700-1922* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 54-71.

provinces.⁵⁶ Other separatist movements could be rooted in Sultan Abdülhamid II's strategy for consolidating his rule by pitting internal and external enemies against each other.⁵⁷ Furthermore, the modernizations in technology and transportation allowed Ottomans to travel to the West, which spurred the rise of the Eastern Question.⁵⁸ One answer lay in the context of internal rebellions from minority groups that further undermined the authority of the Ottoman state, already stressed from the burdens of domestic reforms. The 1890s experienced multiple armed separatist movements from ethnic non-Turkish minorities in provinces. Since these rebellions occurred in areas where these ethnic groups constituted the majority of the territory's population, including Macedonians, Bulgarians, Albanians, Greeks, Armenians, and Kurds, these territorial claims further strained Ottoman sovereignty.⁵⁹

Separatist revolts from domestic minorities were prevalent throughout the nineteenth century. Some of the earliest separatist revolts were from the Serbs in 1805, the Greeks in 1821, and the Bulgarians in 1875. One of the most notorious separatist movements originated in Macedonia, and ultimately culminated in the territorial loss of Macedonia in 1912 during the Balkan Wars. The Ottomans were able to maintain nominal control over Macedonia after the 1878 Treaty of Berlin, but the root of the separatism was not eliminated. Macedonia's population was a combination of non-Turkish ethnic groups such as Serbs, Bulgarians, and Greeks, and a majority of Orthodox Christians with a sizable Muslim and Jewish minority. The population of the Macedonia province identified as a separate nation and sought to achieve those aspirations through terrorism and guerrilla tactics. These tactics were not only focused on gathering concessions from the state, but also evoking foreign intervention from diaspora communities and other foreign powers in their favor.⁶⁰ Two internal separatist groups in the 1890s included the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (IMRO),

⁵⁶ Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, 37.

⁵⁷ Mango, *From the Sultan to Atatürk*, 5.

⁵⁸ Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, 130.

⁵⁹ Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, 82.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

seeking autonomy of Macedonia, and the External Macedonian Revolutionary Committee (EMRO), seeking annexation of Bulgaria. Although the Ottomans managed to stave off both of these separatist movements, a coordinated attack by the Balkan states of Serbia, Greece, Bulgaria and Montenegro in 1912 led to the conquest of Ottoman Macedonia in the First Balkan War. Istanbul concluded the Treaty of London with these four states in 1913 which resulted in the loss of Macedonia, Albania, and sections of Thrace. This was a significant because it represented the loss of almost all of the empire's European territories along with territories central to the historical Ottoman identity.⁶¹

The growth and exacerbation of the so-called “Armenian Question” posited another equally challenging threat to the empire’s territorial sovereignty. Armenian claims in Anatolia were based on their majority in six eastern provinces.⁶² From the early 1870s, nationalism and ethnic identity spread among the Armenian community. Armenian resistance groups openly rebelled against the state in the 1890s, and the Ottoman state responded with military repression by *Hamidiye* troops in 1894. Armed tension continued through 1896, including an Armenian group threatening to attack the Ottoman Bank headquarters.⁶³ To offset the superiority of Ottoman security forces, Armenian separatists sought foreign power intervention as means of protecting and securing both legal and territorial rights in Anatolia. During a Russian invasion in Ottoman territory during World War I, Armenian revolutionaries residing in Anatolia joined the Russian troops and sabotaged their homeland behind Ottoman lines.⁶⁴ As an interwar military necessity to combat domestic insurgency, the Ottoman Empire deported the Armenian population to the Syrian desert to physically remove the perceived internal threat. In the midst of World War I, the domestic separatist rebellions were viewed as threats to the health of the state.⁶⁵

⁶¹ Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, 83; 108-9.

⁶² Ibid., 83. In Mango, *From the Sultan to Ataturk*, 7, Mango asserts that in fact, Kurds, Turks, and other Muslim groups constituted a greater part of the population than the Armenian Christians.

⁶³ Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, 83.

⁶⁴ Mango, *From the Sultan to Ataturk*, 6-7; 17-18.

⁶⁵ Michael Bobelian, *Children of Armenia: A Forgotten Genocide and the Century-long Struggle for Justice* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2012), 24-25.

Kurds were also a historic source of rebellion at the end of the Ottoman Empire and the early Turkish Republic. It is important to note that Kurdish nationalism did not pose a territorial or existential threat to the declining Ottoman state due to Kurdish tribal rivalries that divided the community. As long as the Ottoman state permitted the Kurdish communities autonomy and self-rule, relations were largely peaceful. After many threats to the Ottoman state were defeated by the start of the Republic, the new state started to reduce the autonomy previously granted to Kurdish areas. After centuries of self-rule, the Kurds resisted Turkish state-building through domestic insurgency and the ensuing Kurdish rebellions during the early Republican period will be discussed later in this chapter.

The aforementioned movements demonstrated the weakness of territory, language, and common history as tools to knit the empire together, as the Ottomans struggled to incorporate the ethnically heterogeneous groups into a national Ottoman identity. The inability to harmonize these movements within the political and military developments at the international level led to the anxieties regarding territorial integrity and foreign intervention discussed in the next section.

C. TURKISH TERRITORIAL CHALLENGES

1. Wilsonian Self-Determination

The nature of the post-World War I settlements dictated the tone of the state consolidation during the early Republican period. The 1918 Modros armistice ended hostilities in the Middle Eastern theatre and imposed punitive measures accepted by the Ottoman government. Outside of the military provisions, the Allied powers reserved the right to occupy any territory deemed to be a security threat, particularly the Armenian provinces. The end of World War I brought foreign intervention as the norm rather than the exception since the Allied powers abused this provision. Furthermore, the 1918 armistice left key territorial claims unsettled, including the issue of British occupation of Mosul and French occupation of *Sancak* (Hatay) after the armistice.⁶⁶ The postwar terms

⁶⁶ Zürcher, *The Young Turk Legacy and Nation Building*, 137-38.

established precedents in terms of territory and interaction with foreign states that would later be formalized in the Treaty of Sèvres.

American President Woodrow Wilson affirmed the principle of self-determination in the wake of the crumbling of imperial powers after World War I. Wilsonian self-determination was welcomed by many Ottoman Turks who viewed the Fourteen Points as a solution to the challenges to their sovereignty. The Twelfth Point was particularly relevant:

The Turkish portion of the present Ottoman Empire should be assured a secure sovereignty, but the other nationalities which are now under Turkish rule should be assured an undoubted security of life and an absolutely unmolested opportunity of autonomous development, and the Dardanelles should be permanently opened as a free passage to the ships and commerce of all nations under international guarantees.⁶⁷

This foundation was further bolstered by British Prime Minister David Lloyd George who assured that the Allies were not aiming ~~to~~ to deprive Turkey of its capital, or of the rich and renowned lands of Asia Minor and Thrace, which are predominantly Turkish by race.”⁶⁸ The Western declarations of ~~“secure sovereignty”~~ for ethnically Turkish Muslims were considered even more necessary in light of the Treaty of Sèvres. Since the treaty sought to separate territory inhabited by Turkish Muslims from Anatolia, the Wilsonian Twelfth Point was seen as a validation and safeguard to their border claims.⁶⁹ However, Wilsonian self-determinism also endorsed the legitimacy of the nationalism that contributed to the internal decay of Ottoman territory. Ottoman and Turkish leaders tended to focus more on the guarantee of territorial sovereignty rather than the ~~“security of life”~~ and ~~“autonomous development”~~ of non-Turkish ethnic groups on Turkish territory.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Yale Law School, “8 January, 1918: President Woodrow Wilson’s Fourteen Points,” The Avalon Project: Documents in Law, History and Diplomacy, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/wilson14.asp.

⁶⁸ As quoted in Mango, *From the Sultan to Ataturk*, 23.

⁶⁹ Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, 147. At the time, the CUP justified these claims with *müdafaai hukuk-u milliye* (defense of national rights).

⁷⁰ Mango, *From the Sultan to Ataturk*, 26-27; 57.

2. Republican Territorial Claims

In light of the 1918 armistice and the expansion of Wilsonian principles, the Ottoman Empire appeared to be heading down the path toward partition and foreign intervention. In 1919, Mustafa Kemal, an Ottoman military officer, arrived at a Black Sea port, resigned his commission in the Ottoman military, and began to form a revolutionary Turkish government. He organized a Turkish nationalist congress in Erzurum that published the National Pact in early 1920 outlining the nationalists' official aims and definition of Turkish sovereignty. The agreed terms of the National Pact were communicated internationally to the Allied powers in February 1920.⁷¹ As explained below, the territorial claims of the National Pact were not fully incorporated into the territory apportioned by the Treaty of Lausanne.

The National Pact's six articles highlighted the union of Ottoman Muslims, defined by religion, race, and aim.⁷² Atatürk envisioned a population where religious minorities of Jews and Christians—primarily the Armenians and Greeks—on Turkish territory were official minorities, and other Muslim groups—including Kurds—were part of the Turkish majority. This definition included all Muslim groups that inhabited historically Ottoman territory such as the Kurds, Alevis, and Laz. The more expansive view of Turkish national sovereignty included more than just Turkish-speaking Muslims.⁷³ Ultimately, Atatürk's definition of Turkish identity for sovereignty purposes was “territorial, linguistic and political unity strengthened by a sense of common roots, morals and history.” The exclusion of ethnicity tied Turkish sovereignty closer to Turkish territorial claims in the National Pact and the Turkish language.⁷⁴ This reflects Atatürk's earlier formulation of Turkish identity and sovereignty more fully based on the Turkish language and Islam. Only after the Republic was established in the late 1920s and 1930s did Turkish nationalism take on an ethnic tone.

⁷¹ Mango, *From the Sultan to Ataturk*, 81-85.

⁷² For the National Pact's six articles, see Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, 138-39.

⁷³ Ibid., 139.

⁷⁴ Quoted in Taşpınar, *Kurdish Nationalism and Political Islam in Turkey*, 82.

Furthermore, the Wilsonian definition of sovereignty was the underpinning for the nationalists' territorial objectives. Early republican leaders made claims to Eastern Anatolia, Mosul, Thrace, and Hatay as the territorial basis of the Republic. Why did the leaders choose these borders instead of expanding their claims to all former Ottoman land? First, the territory generally aligned with the land apportioned during the 1918 armistice at Modros ending World War I, providing legal precedent. Next, the pact's territorial claims excluded areas with majority Christian populations of Greeks and Armenians in order to create defensible borders with a majority Turkish population. In Atatürk's own words, he sought to "safeguard the life and independence of the nation within its frontiers"; this protection conferred a sacrosanct quality on Turkey's territorial integrity from the onset.⁷⁵ Last, the participants at the National Pact were able to gain external justification and validation of their territorial claims within the framework of Wilsonian principles. According to the Fourteen Points, the Turkish portion of the Ottoman Empire was afforded "secure sovereignty," and freedom of commerce in the Dardanelles.⁷⁶ These Wilsonian principles authenticated the authority of the newly envisioned borders without foreign interference to Muslim lands—a much needed right after centuries of foreign manipulation and territorial incursion.

3. Terms of the Treaty of Sèvres

Since the Central Powers sued for separate peace after World War I, the Ottoman Sultan and the Allied powers signed the Treaty of Sèvres on August 10, 1920. The treaty reduced the size of the Ottoman Empire to one third of its territory in terms more punitive than those assigned to the Germany Empire in the Treaty of Versailles. The terms constituted significant territory and sovereignty losses: the Ottoman state lost the territory of Eastern Thrace—all the way up to Istanbul—to Greece; Izmir and surrounding territory remained under Ottoman territory for five years and then control would be determined by a referendum; and the Ottoman Hatay province was allocated to Syria.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Taşpınar, *Kurdish Nationalism and Political Islam in Turkey*, 58-59.

⁷⁶ Yale Law School, "8 January, 1918: President Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points," The Avalon Project: Documents in Law, History and Diplomacy, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/wilson14.asp.

⁷⁷ Mango, *From the Sultan to Ataturk*, 99.

The most punishing terms included granting Kurdish provinces autonomy with the possibility of independence administered by the League of Nations after a year and the creation of an independent Armenian state on Ottoman territory. These revised borders reduced the Ottoman Empire to a small piece of northern Asia Minor with Istanbul as the capital. The treaty largely reaffirmed the Allied protectorates of Ottoman land outlined in the 1916 Sykes-Picot agreement in regards to Mosul and Hatay.⁷⁸

Although never implemented, Sèvres remains the ~~benchmark~~ “benchmark” for the Turkish imagination on the ~~could have been~~ “could have been” in their territorial legacy. As summarized by a contemporary British diplomat in Istanbul, the memory of the Treaty of Sèvres remained ~~intact~~, though dead, whole though ungratified.”⁷⁹ The eventual territorial claims of Turkey were derived from a combination of reaction to the Treaty of Sèvres, protection against the separatist movements causing internal turmoil for over a century, and an affirmation of Wilsonian ~~secure~~ “secure sovereignty.” Although superseded by the below described Treaty of Lausanne, the legacy of Sèvres wreaked havoc, affecting the way Turkish nationalism was defined, questions of ethnicity, and the formation of Republican borders.

4. Treaty of Lausanne

The territorial destruction waged at Sèvres was unable to be annulled and reconciled through peaceful diplomacy. Sensing resistance and the Turkish leaders’ unwillingness to accept the terms of the Treaty of Sèvres, Greek troops—acting on behalf of the Allied Powers—occupied Thrace and western Anatolia. A group of Turkish nationalists, led by Mustafa Kemal, rejected the treaty outright and launched the War of Independence against the occupying Allied Greek forces to prevent implementation. After a year of war and the defeat of the Greeks, the Turks triumphed because no other Allied Power was willing to assume the military responsibility to fight the Turks.⁸⁰ The

⁷⁸ Changes between the Sykes-Picot protectorates and the Treaty of Sèvres mandates included Mosul transferring from the French to the British and the Italians losing control of Izmir. See Mango, *From the Sultan to Ataturk*, 98-99.

⁷⁹ Quoted in Mango, *From the Sultan to Ataturk*, 99.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 92-93; 141.

victory of the Turkish nationalist troops led to the Allied government's recognition of Turkish sovereignty with the implementation of the Treaty of Lausanne.⁸¹ Five years after the armistice at Modros ended hostilities between the Allied forces and the Ottoman Empire, the Treaty of Lausanne went into force in 1923 to formally end war in the Middle Eastern theatre. The treaty officially recognized the Turkish nationalist government, abolished the sultanate, and decisively terminated the Ottoman Empire's six centuries of rule. The subsequent peace negotiations in Lausanne were drastically different than the meeting at Sèvres; this time, it was the meeting of equals as Greece removed troops from Istanbul, Western Anatolia, and Eastern Thrace and negotiations began.⁸² In contrast to the post-World War I peace treaties signed by Germany, Austria, and Bulgaria, the Treaty of Lausanne was more durable from the onset due to Turkey's role as an equal negotiator.

The terms of the Treaty of Lausanne formalized the post-War of Independence status of territory. Eastern Thrace was officially ceded to Turkey and British control over Mosul was affirmed. As victors of the War of Independence and determined to reverse the Treaty of Sèvres, Turkish nationalists employed a "maximalist interpretation" of the National Pact.⁸³ However, not all prior territorial claims made were sanctioned at Lausanne. The National Pact claimed Hatay province (the Iskenderun/Alexandretta area) and Mosul province, and permitted referendums in western Thrace and the areas lost to Russia in 1878. However, these areas were not incorporated into Republican territory with varying responses from early Turkish leaders. Hatay province went to French-ruled Syria, Mosul to the British Iraq, and Batum returned to Soviet Georgia. In sum, early Turkish leaders agreed to relinquish claims on Western Thrace to Greece in order to guarantee the rights of Greeks living in Istanbul. Batum was retained by Soviet Georgia in exchange for Turkish control over the Eastern Anatolian provinces of Kars, Ardahan, and Artvin, which were already under Turkish military control. Scholars have made

⁸¹ "The Treaty of Sèvres, 1920," in *The Treaties of Peace 1919-1923, Vol. II*; Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, 147.

⁸² Mango, *From the Sultan to Ataturk*, 145-46.

⁸³ Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, 161.

claims that Atatürk realized that full implementation of the National Pact could not be achieved, but the negotiating stance of the Turkish delegation in Lausanne still lobbied for full implementation.⁸⁴

Notably, the negotiations at Lausanne aimed to assert the founding concepts of Turkish identity and nationalism through downplaying Kurdish and Armenian territorial claims. Turkish nationalism was founded on unity defined through territory and common history, and Atatürk continued to stress the unity between Turks and Kurds that was envisioned in the National Pact. Despite previous Kurdish separatist tendencies, early Republican leaders believed that Kurds could be incorporated into the Turkish identity. At the negotiations in Lausanne, an early Republican leader and Atatürk's eventual successor, İsmet İnönü, argued that Kurds were "Turkians" and therefore ethnically Turkish.⁸⁵ It was only in the post-Lausanne era, as Kurdish rebellions promoted a separate Kurdish identity, that ethnicity began to be emphasized as an essential component of Turkish nationalism to the detriment of Kurdish cultural and linguistic rights.⁸⁶ Furthermore, Republican leaders during this period also created a national myth of the "Turkish History Thesis." In order to delegitimize Armenian and Kurdish territorial claims and provide a legitimate nation for the new state, Republican leaders argued that Turkish civilization descended from the Hittite civilization in Anatolia.⁸⁷

Subsequently, the outcome of Lausanne did not recognize the Armenians and the Kurds and did not allocate the independent states previously demarcated in the Treaty of Sèvres. First, Armenian representation was absent in the Lausanne negotiations. Armenians experienced brief independence from 1918-1920 prior to the Treaty of Sèvres, but in 1920 Turkish forces defeated Armenian forces. In the following Treaty of Alexandropol, Armenia renounced claims to the provinces in Anatolia and accepted Turkish jurisdiction. The new Turkish-Armenian border was established during the

⁸⁴ Mango, *From the Sultan to Atatürk*, 162-63.

⁸⁵ David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds*, 3rd ed. (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2007), 190.

⁸⁶ Göçek, *The Transformation of Turkey*, 128.

⁸⁷ Traditionally, a nation forms a state instead of the other way around. See Göçek, *The Transformation of Turkey*, 125.

Turkish War of Independence at the 1921 Treaty of Kars. After the Treaty of Lausanne, Armenia became a subsidiary of the Soviet Union.⁸⁸ A sovereign and permanent Armenia was only established after the end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Also notable was the absence of an independent Kurdistan during the Lausanne negotiations. Instead, Article 29 of the Treaty of Lausanne protected minority rights in commerce, religion, and press, but was never fully implemented for the Kurdish population in Anatolia. It is not a coincidence that the territorial questions openly negotiated and signed at Lausanne produced positive interactions, but the absence of Armenian and Kurdish representation and lack of definite settlement has caused decades of turmoil. Without a mutual agreement between the groups, Turkey continues to revert back to Sèvres as the benchmark for the way it views territorial questions with Kurdish and Armenian minorities.⁸⁹

D. TERRITORIAL QUESTIONS 1923–1938

In the early days of the Republic, Turkish foreign policy was categorized by defending the gains made in Lausanne and regaining rightful Turkish territory that was left unsettled. In response to the Treaty of Sèvres, Turkish nationalism emerged as “state borders nationalism” around the Anatolian territory and Turkey developed a distinct “survivalist instinct” that strengthened nationalist justifications.⁹⁰ In the early stages of the republic, Turkish nationalism and the inviolability of territory merged into one principle. As outlined above, Turkish identity in the early Republican period was still ill-defined. The period from the establishment of the Republic in 1923 to Atatürk’s death in 1938 was a tumultuous period where Turkish borders were solidified and Turkish identity further evolved.

One defining force in the 1920s and 1930s was the prevalence of Kurdish rebellions. It was only after the uniting factor of Muslim identity decreased without a

⁸⁸ Arus Harutyunyan, *Contesting National Identities in an Ethnically Homogeneous State: The Case of Armenian Democratization* (doctoral dissertation, Western Michigan University, 2009), 129-30.

⁸⁹ Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Lausanne Peace Treaty,” accessed July 10, 2014, http://www.mfa.gov.tr/lausanne-peace-treaty-part-i_-_political-clauses.en.mfa.

⁹⁰ Taşpınar, *Kurdish Nationalism and Political Islam in Turkey*, 59.

common Christian enemy from the Greek occupation during the War of Independence that cleavages emerged between the Turks and the Kurds. In 1925, Sheik Said led a rebellion of Kurdish tribes against the abolition of the Islamic Caliphate.⁹¹ For the first time since Lausanne, the army was deployed and it marked the beginning of an era of razing of Kurdish villages and martial law in areas with Kurdish populations. By 1937, the historically defiant city of Dersim began to revolt; the costs of repression were high for both the Turkish military and the Kurds.⁹² Between 1924 and 1938, there were a total of seventeen Kurdish rebellions. These rebellions highlight multiple themes present in early Kurdish unrest and separatism: Kurdish nationalism, resistance to the process of state centralization, and inter-tribal rivalry.⁹³ Taking into account the nature of Kurdish movements in the Ottoman period, it is likely that the rebellions were more due to the infringement of Kurdish autonomy during the state building process than Kurdish nationalism.

Conversely, the repressive response to Kurdish separatism illustrates that the Kemalist government perceived the rebellions as serious threats to the newly established state. Since these movements challenged Turkish sovereignty over the new territory claims, Turkish nationalism took an ethnic turn in order to eliminate the Kurdish challenge. This manifested in the suppression of the Kurdish cultural and linguistic identity in order to eradicate Kurdish ethnic claims and unite Kurds into the Turkish national identity. Therefore, the Kurdish uprisings represented one of the most serious threats to Turkish politicians in the formative stages of the Republic and Kurdish separatism has historically been seen as an existential threat to the Republic's territorial integrity.⁹⁴

In the following territorial questions of Mosul and Hatay, it is important to note the role ethnicity plays in territorial matters. Territorial integrity was still the founding

⁹¹ Although the Sheik Said revolt is framed in regards to Kurdish separatism, it is important to highlight the religious motivations of this landmark uprising.

⁹² McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds*, 198-210.

⁹³ Taşpınar, *Kurdish Nationalism and Political Islam in Turkey*, 79; Mango, *Turkey and the War on Terror*, 9.

⁹⁴ Taşpınar, *Kurdish Nationalism and Political Islam in Turkey*, 203-4.

precondition for national cohesion and a strong Turkish state, but ethnicity increased in importance and was used as a tool to fortify Turkish borders. Therefore, territory claims were integral to the state apparatus and the rejection of the Treaty of Sèvres had not been completed. Although Lausanne had resolved the majority of the territorial disputes and ushered in an era of lasting peace, the Turkish claims on Mosul and Hatay remained unresolved due to the ambiguity created by Sèvres.

1. Mosul

In the early 1920s, Mosul province had a majority Kurdish population with a Turkish minority. Originally ceded to the French in the Sykes-Picot agreement, it was later turned over to the British mandate of Iraq. In the National Pact, Turkey claimed Mosul as part of its territory to expel foreign influence and delineate its borders. The Treaty of Lausanne left the Mosul dispute unresolved, and there were attempts at direct negotiations between Turkey and Britain. In order to gain control over Mosul, Turkey pursued all avenues short of war including signing a new treaty with the Russians to pressure the British and instigating a Kurdish rebellion against the British in Mosul. Ultimately, the League of Nations stepped in to directly in 1926 and ceded the territory to the British mandate of Iraq, which Turkey accepted. In return, Turkey received a monetary settlement from the British.⁹⁵ Although Turkey formally accepted this settlement, Turkish leaders still retained the hope of regaining Mosul well into the twenty-first century. In multiple instances during the 1990s, Turkish politicians used the tens of thousands of Turkish soldiers operating within Iraq as justification for a change in the Turkish-Iraqi border in favor of Turkey.⁹⁶ As recently as June 2014, there were reports of Turkey and the Islamic State utilizing water from the Euphrates River as an instrument to punish Mosul.⁹⁷ In a press release, the Turkish MFA retold how both Iraq

⁹⁵ Mango, *From the Sultan to Atatürk*, 163-64, 174; Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, 201.

⁹⁶ Jung, "The Sèvres Syndrome," 13.

⁹⁷ Mohanad Hage Ali, "ISIS' path of destruction drains Iraq and Syria's water supplies," *Al Arabiya News*, June 21, 2014.

and Syria have exploited water shortages for their own political purposes in order to assert territorial claims.⁹⁸

Mosul was another demonstration of the way that Turkish leaders defined their borders in terms of territory and Western influence. Instead of acquiescing to the League of Nations, Turkey used the territorial dispute as an opportunity to assert its sovereignty. Mosul was integral to the Turkish state for its economic value due to the oil revenue and its territorial contribution to bolstering Turkish sovereignty was important in both the early Republic period and beyond. Additionally, Mosul is an important episode that highlights the intersection of ethnic and territorial claims. Throughout the twentieth century, Mosul remained an unfulfilled focus of Turkish irredentists who focused on the Wilsonian arguments made at Lausanne as the true basis of Turkish territory. For Turks, Mosul also represented British influence in Turkish territorial affairs and support for Kurdish nationalism. Many believe that the British supported the Sheik Said rebellion in the Mosul region, which resulted in British mandate over the territory in the Lausanne negotiations. These theorists claim that the Kurdish rebellion persuaded Turkey to not pursue territorial claims over Mosul and the British-supported rebellion was designed to demonstrate the difficulties over ruling Kurdish territory. Future Turkish governments point to British mandate over Mosul as Western support for Kurdish nationalism, and therefore, support for Kurdish statehood.⁹⁹ These fears remain ingrained in the nationalist psyche and Turkey's failure to annex Mosul continues to aggravate the concerns over territorial integrity and foreign intervention.

2. Hatay

Another post-Lausanne territorial question was the outcome of Hatay.¹⁰⁰ In the aftermath of World War I, the League of Nations sought to implement “Wilsonian” self-determination with a mandate system intended to bridge earlier colonialism with full independence to the local populations. The Ankara Treaty, a separate peace treaty

⁹⁸ Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Press Release Regarding the Amount of Water That Turkey Releases from the Euphrates River,” No. 228, July 4, 2014.

⁹⁹ Taşpınar, *Kurdish Nationalism and Political Islam in Turkey*, 80-81, 166.

¹⁰⁰ Hatay is also referred to in the literature as *Sancak* or *Sanjak*.

between France and Turkey demarcated the Turko-Syrian border, but also provided a special status for Turkish inhabitants. The Turkish minority in Hatay was granted full cultural rights and Turkish was recognized as an official language. In 1923, the Treaty of Lausanne ceded Hatay to French-mandated Syria. This existed as the territorial status quo until France granted Syria independence and created Hatay province as an autonomous region within Syria in 1936.¹⁰¹

Taking advantage of the polyglot and heterogeneous population within Syria and the special status of the Turkish minority, Turkey asserted its territorial claims on Hatay after Syrian independence. Consistent with the post-Sèvres view of borders, Turkey made irredentist territorial claims in Hatay based on a common Turkish identity tied to language and ancestry. There was a legend that while serving in Hatay in World War I, Atatürk was moved by the Turkish-speaking population and sought incorporation into the new state. Although French mandate officers counted Turks as 39 percent of Hatay's population in 1936, Turkey was able to argue that Turks were the majority population by claiming the Nusayris (Alawites), Hatay's second largest group, as part of the Turkish majority since significant minority populations of Alawites, Sunni Arabs, Kurds, Turcomen, and Armenians existed. Another basis of Turkish claims was that the population shared fellow Hittite ancestry; Turkey changed the name to Hatay and the people were referred to as *Eti Türkleri* to emphasize the Hittite origins.¹⁰² Atatürk utilized Hatay as an instrument of nationalism and claimed that the Hatay issue kept "our nation occupied every day" and the area's "genuine owners are pure Turks."¹⁰³ Turkish claims to Hatay were based on more than irredentism—Turkey did not claim the land of Turkish speakers in Bulgaria—but also based on strategic and political motives. Strategically, Turkey needed Hatay as a buffer zone to protect its vulnerable port from Italian invasion, similar to World War I. In the context of the 1937 Dersim uprising and state consolidation, Hatay was a microcosm for Turkey's political ambitions to assert

¹⁰¹ Sarah D. Shields, *Fezzes in the River* (London: Oxford University Press, 2011), 6, 20; Çağaptay, *Islam, Secularism, and Nationalism in Modern Turkey*, 116.

¹⁰² Çağaptay, *Islam, Secularism, and Nationalism in Modern Turkey*, 117-18; Shields, *Fezzes in the River*, 6-7.

¹⁰³ Quoted in Çağaptay, *Islam, Secularism, and Nationalism in Modern Turkey*, 117.

itself as a developed state.¹⁰⁴ Turkish territorial claims represented an important protection of territorial integrity that needed to be further iterated and protected after the Treaty of Sèvres.

The League of Nations attempted to settle the issue by creating an independent state of Hatay in 1937, but the fledgling state suffered from grave external pressures and internal disarray. For example, the French asserted their influence by supporting domestic rebellions against Turkey by Kurdish, Armenian, and Assyrian groups. As independent Hatay synchronized their political, economic, and military policies with neighboring Turkey, the Turkish majority in the region expanded as unprotected minority groups fled. Ultimately, France transferred power in return for protection against Turkish aggression during World War II and Turkey officially annexed Hatay as its sixty-third province in 1939. Newly liberated Syria, however, contested France's ability to supersede the terms of the Treaty of Lausanne. Although officially part of Turkey, Syria still lays claims to Hatay and official Syrian maps include Hatay, including a map on the Syrian Parliament's website. The dispute has never been officially resolved, and has recently been resurrected in diplomatic channels. In 1998, Turkey accused Syria of supporting Kurdish separatist groups and Syria alleged Turkey diverted water from the Euphrates River. Today, Syria infrequently raises the issue on the international scene due to fears of provoking a demonstration of force from Turkey.¹⁰⁵

E. LEGACY OF SÈVRES

As outlined above, Turkish borders were in flux from the establishment of the Republic until the outbreak of WWII. The onset of another world war inflamed Turkish ingrained historical hostility and suspicion toward great power politics.

1. World War II and NATO

Turkey's territorial anxieties continued throughout the subsequent decades and influenced its reluctance to enter World War II. In World War I, the Ottoman Empire

¹⁰⁴ Shields, *Fezzes in the River*, 241.

¹⁰⁵ Shields, *Fezzes in the River*, 10-12, 232-40; Emma Lundgren Jörum, "Syria's 'Lost Province': The Hatay Question Returns," Carnegie Endowment for Peace (January 28, 2014).

entered the war on behalf of the Central Powers; future Turkish leaders saw this alliance as a disastrous first step that culminated in the Treaty of Sèvres. In a direct reaction to the internal threats at the end of the Ottoman Empire and the alliances that dragged the Ottomans into war, the new republic sought to consolidate and ensure its territorial integrity through non-aggression pacts and friendship treaties. The Turkish government signed friendship treaties with the Soviet Union (1921, extended in 1925), Greece (1930), and Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Romania, and Greece (1934). In addition, relations were also normalized with Iran, Afghanistan, and Iraq during the interwar period. This guarded foreign policy sought to keep the newly consolidated state neutral as the world moved toward a second world war.¹⁰⁶

In World War II, Turkey continued its trajectory of non-interventionism in order to protect its new borders. Although the war reached the Turkish borders in 1941 with German occupation of Greece and Bulgaria joining the Axis powers, Turkey remained neutral. By 1944, Turkey confronted the possibility of post-war isolation if it maintained its neutrality, so it declared war on Germany in February 1945 purely in order to qualify as a founding member of the United Nations. The consistent policy of détente and neutrality just short of isolationism illustrates the skepticism of both the Atatürk and İnönü administrations to intervention and manipulation from European powers. With Turkish borders in flux up until 1938 and few means for safeguarding its territory, Turkish leaders could not risk a post-World War II settlement resembling Sèvres. This fear of territorial loss due to foreign manipulation provided the foundation for the way in which Turkish politicians shaped foreign policy in the interwar period.¹⁰⁷

During the Cold War, the goal of protecting territorial integrity brought Turkey to the other extreme of foreign policy. The Soviet Union's territorial challenge was the catalyst for Turkey's shift toward westernization and integration in order to obtain security guarantees from stronger states. After Turkey declared war on Germany in February 1945, the Soviet Union abrogated the 1925 Soviet-Turkish friendship agreement that regulated the Black Sea Straits and the Soviet-Turkish border on the

¹⁰⁶ Jung, "The Sèvres Syndrome," 7.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.; Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, 204-5.

Armenian provinces. The Soviet Union made territorial claims on the Turkish provinces of Kars and Ardahan in order to augment the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic. During this time, Turkish leaders were forced to rely on Western intervention by the United States and Britain in order to thwart Soviet influence and territorial gain.¹⁰⁸ Turkish politicians feared that Soviet territorial claims could set a precedent for the reversal of other newly established borders.

The Soviet claim on Turkish territory overturned Turkey's policy of neutrality and instead propelled Turkey toward increased westernization to retain and defend its borders. By the start of the Cold War, Turkey was an active member in defense alliances and economic integration relationships: Organization of European Economic Cooperation (1948), the Council of Europe (1949), and NATO (1952).¹⁰⁹ Particularly, Turkey pursued membership in NATO as a tool to protect against dismemberment from foreign territorial claims. As the United States poured money into states bordering the Soviet Union as a strategy of Cold War maneuvering, Turkey utilized this money to bolster its military and national security establishment to protect against both internal and external threats. Instead of being at the mercy of foreign powers, Turkey hoped that its inclusion into the European system would act as a deterrent to intervention and as a protection to its borders.¹¹⁰ As will be discussed further in Chapter IV, the inclusion into the Western system has its limits—Turkey rejected NATO use of its territory during the 2003 invasion of Iraq.

2. Sèvres Syndrome

The territorial loss and history of separatism at the end of the Ottoman Empire and the early Republican period is most critical to understanding how the Treaty of Sèvres transformed into the Sèvres Syndrome. The challenges to Turkish territorial integrity in the Republican era contain two central themes: fear of foreign intervention from Western powers and anxiety over territorial dismemberment as a result of internal

¹⁰⁸ Hovsepyan, "The Fears of Turkey: The Sèvres Syndrome," 9-10.

¹⁰⁹ Jung, "The Sèvres Syndrome," 8.

¹¹⁰ Fuller, *The New Turkish Republic*, 33.

rebellion or external claims. As will be described in the following chapters, these beliefs have become the focal point for Turkish leaders to make decisions on matters such as reactions to minority groups and counterterrorism policies. Ultimately, these themes can be tied to how the Treaty of Sèvres provided early Turkish leaders and public the historical context for their territorial anxieties. This ingrained fear of Sèvres has developed into an obsession, disease, or “syndrome” within the Turkish public. Specifically, the “Sèvres syndrome refers to those individuals, groups or institutions in Turkey who interpret all public interactions—domestic and foreign— through a framework of fear and anxiety over the possible annihilation, abandonment or betrayal of the Turkish state by the West.”¹¹¹

The culmination of Ottoman separatism and territorial loss into the Sèvres Syndrome illustrates the importance of this early history. Instead of being expunged by Turkey’s favorable and secure borders, the last 150 years of Ottoman territorial loss has proven to be a critical formative period influencing future eras. There is a wide-ranging consensus between early Republican leaders through contemporary Turkish leaders that Sèvres represents the culmination of the previously outlined internal separatist movements and external claims that plagued the Empire for a century. Regardless of the nature of the international system, these concerns endure and constitute continuity between past and present. Göçek argues that the new Turkish state repressed the memory of decades of Ottoman territorial loss, the destruction of the Empire, and continuous war from 1912–22. The inability of the state to come to terms with this history and the nature of Republican state-building provides the reason that the Sèvres Treaty was transformed into a syndrome.¹¹²

The first tenet of the Sèvres Syndrome is fear of foreign intervention from Western powers. After the above articulated history, Turkish leaders connected the domestic rebellions with the belief that the rebellions were fermented or supported by a foreign state. By the time the rebellions were put down in 1938, the international environment of the Cold War sustained the Syndrome from the 1940s to the fall of the

¹¹¹ Göçek, *The Transformation of Turkey*, 99.

¹¹² Ibid., 116-17.

Soviet Union. The subsequent Westernization process with globalization and the rise of the European Union has allowed the Syndrome to remain through the present.¹¹³ Furthermore, contemporary Turkish leadership identifies that external factors are “permanently” threatening Turkish internal stability.¹¹⁴ To a degree, Turkey believes it is a pariah state encircled by enemies that seek its destruction—a sentiment that has been articulated by Turkish policymakers’ rhetoric.¹¹⁵ Instead of continuously evaluating the relationship between the West and Turkey, Turkish leaders fixate on the early Republican view of the West as “a monolithic, aggressive force to be defended against.”¹¹⁶ Some Turkish commentators are careful to keep the Treaty of Sèvres contextualized instead of extracting it from the surrounding historical events. In 1998, Turkish columnist Zulfu Livaneli posited: “Even in the worst days of the war, [Atatürk] did not directly oppose Western powers even though they were trying to divide Turkey...We are afraid of Sèvres, but we don’t learn from the man who put Sèvres in its grave.”¹¹⁷ A static assessment of the West compared to contemporary events in the dynamic international arena has transformed Sèvres into a syndrome affecting both foreign and domestic policy.

Second, Turkish leaders have developed an ingrained anxiety over territorial dismemberment. As outlined above, there is a pervasive anxiety originating in 1921 that domestic and international powers are trying to whittle Turkish territory to a nub. The Treaty of Sèvres was predicated at a particular historical moment when ninety percent of Ottoman territory was lost from 1878 to 1918 and the six-century-old Empire was abolished by the West.¹¹⁸ This deep historical humiliation transformed fears of early Republican leaders into a syndrome that would plague multiple generations of Turkish

¹¹³ Ibid., 134-35.

¹¹⁴ Jung, “The Sèvres Syndrome,” 4.

¹¹⁵ For example, in 1999 former defense minister Hikmet Sami Turk stated that “Geographic destiny placed Turkey in the virtual epicenter of a ‘Bermuda Triangle’ of post-Cold War volatility and uncertainty, with the Balkans, the Caucasus, and the Middle East encircling us.” Quoted in Jung, “The Sèvres Syndrome,” 3.

¹¹⁶ Göçek, *The Transformation of Turkey*, 121.

¹¹⁷ Stephen Kinzer, “Turks See Throwback to Partition in Europe’s Focus on Kurds,” *New York Times*, December 7, 1998.

¹¹⁸ Göçek, *The Transformation of Turkey*, 116-17.

leaders. As illustrated above, the fear of territorial dismemberment is important since the founding basis of Turkish nationalism is common territory, not ethnicity. Any action that suggests a change in Turkish territory inadvertently challenges the very foundation of Turkish identity.

Within the context of fears of Western intervention, manifestations of the Sèvres Syndrome are most prevalent in Armenian and Kurdish issues. As Turkish nationalism shifted toward an emphasis on ethnicity rather than language and religion, Sèvres provided a justification for the creation of minorities as ‘enemies of the state.’ Incorrectly, homogeneous ethno-nationalism was constructed as the fundamental basis of Turkish identity. Once this myth institutionalized in the Republican period, the previous benign minority rebellions were refashioned as existential threats to the state. Göçek highlights the role of Sèvres in this transformation:

Just like the Sèvres Treaty, which had attempted to determine the future of the Ottoman Empire along the dimensions of religion and ethnicity, the Sèvres syndrome it generated led the Turkish state and military to identify and exclude social groups along the same lines.¹¹⁹

The harsh realities of the Treaty of Sèvres map provide a glimpse of the counterfactual and serve as an explanation for the way Turks view their territorial integrity.

Last, the Sèvres Syndrome has manifested through references to the treaty by Turkish leaders and policymakers throughout the twentieth century. First, one explanation for the thriving legacy of Sèvres decades into the Republican era is the sustained leadership of the Ottoman generation until the end of the Cold War.¹²⁰ Next, Turkish leaders have a propensity to frame political problems as Western conspiracies. One recent example is former President Süleyman Demirel’s twisting European concerns for Kurdish cultural rights as the desire for the West “to involve the Sèvres Treaty to set up a Kurdish state in the region.”¹²¹ Furthermore, Foreign Minister Davutoğlu also stated:

¹¹⁹ Göçek, *The Transformation of Turkey*, 158.

¹²⁰ For a detailed explanation of the Ottoman generational factor, see Ibid., 137-46.

¹²¹ Quoted in Jung, “The Sèvres Syndrome,” 3.

Since it was through the Treaty of Lausanne [in 1923] that the Turkish Republic, born on the ashes of the Ottoman Empire, had guaranteed its security and sovereignty, Turkish policy-makers think that any changes to this treaty would produce security risks [to the Republic].¹²²

These statements by top Turkish policymakers illustrate the legacy of Sèvres and the leaders' predisposition to point to the treaty's culpability during periods of insecurity. Although Sèvres is conveniently pointed to as the foundation of all threats to Turkish territorial integrity, there are also arguments that the most significant threat is the "centripetal societal forces" resulting from the "Kemalist modernization project."¹²³ The effects of these contemporary on Turkish leader perceptions will be explored in chapters III and IV.

F. CONCLUSION

The survey of early Republican history illustrates that these formative years have a lasting impact on the way Turkish policymakers and the public view their history. The decades of territorial retraction and domestic separatism during the late Ottoman period shaped the way these leaders viewed minorities and the protection of territory with Sèvres viewed as both the culmination and epitome of these historical experiences. The experience at Sèvres transformed Turkey's borders into more than lines on a map—they were and remain critical political issues that symbolize the veracity of identity and nationalism. Also, Sèvres provided the seemingly separatist Kurdish and Armenian population validation for Anatolian territorial claims that continue to plague the national consciousness. Although Lausanne has triumphed in international law, the historical memory makes it impossible for policymakers and the public to look past Sèvres and focus on Lausanne.

Two themes emerge: the changes in the definition of Kurdish nationalism and the omnipotence of the aborted Treaty of Sèvres in the Turkish national psyche. Both these themes validate the chapter's hypothesis that the terms and legacy of the Treaty of Sèvres are most important in the way Turkey frames domestic threats as a danger to its territorial

¹²² Quoted in Göçek, *The Transformation of Turkey*, 107.

¹²³ Jung, "The Sèvres Syndrome," 16.

integrity, and that they affect the evolution of the Turkish national consciousness and the development of its security framework. This particular historical memory of incessant territorial loss, a decade of war, and foreign territorial claims on Anatolia illustrates how the Sèvres Syndrome cannot be easily overcome. Although it is now poised to be a leader in the region, Turkey's borders were in flux merely sixty years ago and Turkey ended its diplomatic isolation within the past fifty years. An understanding both the historical foundation and of the Sèvres Syndrome is necessary to appreciate how Turkish leaders make connections between contemporary events and the late Ottoman and early Republican history. Still, these forces continue to dictate Turkey's domestic and foreign relations, particularly relating to questions of terrorism within Turkey.

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III. EARLY TERRORISM IN TURKEY

A. INTRODUCTION

Turkey has historically experienced periods of domestic unrest and internal rebellion, but separatist terrorism in the mid-twentieth century spurred a unique reaction from Turkish authorities. After a period of rebellion provoked by the consolidation of the Turkish state, domestic peace was established by the time of Atatürk's death in 1938. Stability was largely maintained in the post-World War II era, but the introduction of free party politics and economic liberalization ushered in the "Euro-terrorism" of the 1970s and 1980s into Turkey. In the international arena, terrorism was increasingly being used as a tool—or weapon—to achieve political goals. The terrorist groups during this period were largely Marxist, but many had ethnic and separatist goals including the IRA in the United Kingdom, ETA in Spain, the Red Brigades in Italy, the Baader-Meinhof gang in Germany, and Action Directe in France. Influenced by these international leftist groups, Turkey itself experienced a wave of ideological terrorism from Marxist student groups. Importantly, the violent leftist movements in Turkey were not viewed as existential challenges to the territorial integrity of the Turkish state. The internationalized acceptance of terror as a method for national liberation further aggravated Turkish fears that domestic terrorism could spur territorial loss.¹²⁴

During the rise of international terrorism, the late Ottoman and early Republican interpretations of dissent ironically remained relevant to the ASALA and PKK insurgencies that began in the 1970s and 1980s. Fifty years after the Ottoman Empire was defeated and a generation after Turkey's borders were fully defined, Turkey had seemingly broken ties with its Ottoman past. Despite the re-definition of its historical roots, the Treaty of Sèvres and the separatism of the early Republican period remained a point of reference for the Turkish government's rhetoric when responding to domestic terrorism. Both the PKK and ASALA have directly challenged Turkey's territorial integrity by calling for the creation of separate states carved out of the post-Republic

¹²⁴ Mango, *Turkey and the War on Terror*, 5.

Anatolian borders. Furthermore, ASALA and PKK militants justified their statehood and territorial goals based on terms found in the Treaty of Sèvres—a tendency which fanned the popular and elite insecurities. The Sèvres Syndrome is evident as Turkish officials make rhetorical connections between separatism during the early Republican period and subsequent Armenian and Kurdish terrorist groups.¹²⁵ Although Turkish leaders largely operated under the premise of conspiracy theories in order to legitimize their endangered position, there is a factual basis for foreign support of both ASALA and PKK terrorism and the historical precedent of autonomous Armenian and Kurdish states carved out of Turkish territory.¹²⁶

In this chapter, I argue that Turkey's perception of separatist terrorism and the counterterrorism policies it employs are based in the historical context of the Treaty of Sèvres and the Sèvres Syndrome. First, the fear of separatism has influenced the way the state views minority groups—in this case Armenian and Kurdish—as threats to the writ of the state since the early Republican period. Preceding instances of domestic rebellion were opportunities for foreign intervention in Turkish minority politics; therefore, the state's fear runs deeper than an immediate threat to the monopoly on the use of force. Subsequently, the state has confronted the groups' terrorist tactics as existential challenges to its territorial integrity. Fears of the minority have persisted even after the groups shifted to non-territorial goals or the group was defeated militarily. Furthermore, evidence of extensive foreign support for ASALA and the PKK exacerbates the Sèvres Syndrome fear of Western dismemberment, and aspects of Turkish foreign policy are driven by the reaction to these fears. This chapter will provide evidence on how Turkish authorities and the general Turkish public make rhetorical connections between ASALA and PKK terrorism and the Armenian and Kurdish rebellions after the Treaty of Sèvres.

B. ASALA

Armenian nationalists have been active on Turkish territory both non-violently and through armed resistance since the days of the Ottoman Empire. In 1896, Armenian

¹²⁵ Taşpınar, *Kurdish Nationalism and Political Islam in Turkey*, 6.

¹²⁶ Jung, "The Sèvres Syndrome," 15.

nationalist revolutionaries from the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF), also known as *Dashnaktsutyun*, attempted to take over the Ottoman Bank in Istanbul. In response to this attack and growing mistreatment of the Armenian minority, the Sultan responded with repression of Armenians across the empire that resulted in the death of hundreds of thousands of Armenians between 1894 and 1896.¹²⁷ Decades of continuous loss of Ottoman territory and the terms of the Treaty of Sèvres institutionalized the existing fears of separatist minority groups in early Republican leaders. Armenian separatism peaked during World War I when Armenian volunteers fought against the Ottoman Empire as part of a French foreign national legion, *La Légion Arménienne*. Another instance of violent opposition in the post-World War I period was Operation Nemesis, where the ARF assassinated Ottoman and Azerbaijani leaders for their role in the Armenian genocide. After the establishment of the Republic, Armenians within Turkey were recognized as a protected minority and violent opposition dwindled, but the Armenian community did not have widespread resolution on Ottoman injustices. On April 24, 1965—the fiftieth anniversary of the 1915 genocide—Lebanese Armenians protested in front of the Turkish Embassy in the first Genocide Commemoration Day.¹²⁸ With the international community still silent, members of the Armenian community reacted with a wave of terrorism targeted at Turkish diplomats. Due to the Sèvres Syndrome, rhetoric from contemporary news articles and statements by Turkish authorities illustrates connections between separatism from the Ottoman Empire and the fear of Western manipulation to ASALA terrorism.

1. Origins of Violent Armenian Nationalism and ASALA

The 1915 Armenian genocide assumes great significance in understanding ASALA terrorism and the Turkish response. After decades of continuous territorial loss, Ottoman leaders were hypersensitive to any perceived domestic subversion. As discussed in Chapter II, during World War I, Russian troops invaded Anatolia and Armenians were accused of providing domestic support to the Russian forces. The late Ottoman leaders

¹²⁷ Bobelian, *Children of Armenia*, 20-21.

¹²⁸ Michael M. Gunter, —Armenian Terrorism: A Reappraisal,” *The Journal of Conflict Studies* 27, no. 2 (2007): 1-6.

viewed the sympathetic Armenian population as an internal threat during wartime and moved to deport them from Anatolia. The deportation to the Syrian desert resulted in the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Armenians.¹²⁹ At the time of the publication, the Turkish government had not acknowledged its role in the genocide or apologized for the deaths. During the rise of identity politics in the 1960s, the Armenian diaspora increasingly identified with the shared historical grievance of the 1915 genocide. Similar to the Treaty of Sèvres for Turks, memories of the genocide were deliberately transferred to the next generation to prevent loss of the historical legacy.¹³⁰ Instead of choosing to replace these painful memories with the reality of improved relations with the Turks, the genocide was instead chosen by Armenians as the rallying point to promote their common identity. By the 1970s, the Armenian community had failed to garner international attention for the Ottoman Empire's destruction of Armenians and pay for these wrongdoings through peaceful methods.¹³¹ After non-violent attempts for support had largely failed to gain traction, radical members of the Armenian community moved to violent methods.

The first instance of Armenian terrorism was the targeted killing of Turkish diplomats by an Armenian nationalist not affiliated with any terror group, in Los Angeles, California, in 1973.¹³² Gourgen Yanikian was a survivor of the 1894 Armenian mass murders; his family survived by seeking refuge in the Persian Consulate and as a child, his brother was killed by Turks. He immigrated to the United States in 1946 where he quickly gained wealth and established himself as a writer and producer of literature and plays. Despite this prosperity, he still identified with the Armenian genocide and sought his own form of justice. In 1973, he organized a meeting with two Turkish diplomats near his Santa Barbara home in a ploy to sell a piece of artwork allegedly stolen from an Ottoman sultan. Although there were instances of protests from the Armenian community in Los Angeles and Turkish diplomats frequently requested armed

¹²⁹ Bobelian, *Children of Armenia*, 24-30.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 9.

¹³¹ Ibid., 139-40.

¹³² Mango, *Turkey and the War on Terror*, 12.

guards, the two diplomats took no security precautions. During the meeting, Yanikian murdered both men with a handgun and allowed himself to be arrested.¹³³

Through his own writing, seventy-seven-year-old Gourgen Yanikian asserted that the attack was motivated by the Armenian genocide and that violence was the only method to avenge the historical violence. Although the Turkish diplomats were not part of the Ottoman government that perpetrated the violence, Yanikian viewed the officials as symbols of decades of injustice.¹³⁴ In his letter to multiple major news outlets and public officials, Yanikian stated that the Turks “exterminated 2 million of our race, took over our land, our wealth.”¹³⁵ He also highlighted that his shift to violence was necessary because “the Armenian individual is the only one who will awaken from a long sleep and personally seek his rights from the brutal Turks with the kind of language that only they can understand.”¹³⁶ According to George Mason, the editor of the *California Courier*, who received a copy of Yanikian’s letter, he believed that Yanikian’s actions were not representative of the Armenian community, and that others would not follow this example.¹³⁷ Unfortunately, this was far from the reality of the next two decades.

In 1975, Syrian-Armenian Hagop Hagopian founded ASALA in Beirut at approximately the same time that multiple other Armenian militant groups were founded.¹³⁸ One group, the Justice Commandos of the Armenian Genocide (JCAG), operated as the military wing of the ARF. Although these groups were historically enemies, the feuding factions united in 1975 for joint genocide remembrance ceremonies which led to more closely coordinated attacks.¹³⁹ Hagopian’s group, ASALA, was based

¹³³ Bobelian, *Children of Armenia*, 146-48.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 146.

¹³⁵ Richard West, “Armenians Held in Two Slayings Urged ‘War’ on Turk Envoys,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 30, 1973.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Mango, *Turkey and the War on Terror*, 11-13.

¹³⁹ Bobelian, *Children of Armenia*, 158-59.

in Lebanon until the 1982 Israeli invasion, where new bases were established in Damascus and Athens.¹⁴⁰

2. ASALA Activities and State Response

As terrorism from ASALA and other Armenian militant groups increased and gained support the 1970s and 1980s, Yanikian's assassination of Turkish diplomats endured as the template for future attacks. According to official records from the Turkish MFA, Armenian terrorists killed thirty-one diplomats and immediate family members in sixteen different countries between 1973 and 1984.¹⁴¹ Other estimates put the toll of Armenian terrorism as high as forty-two Turkish diplomats assassinated in 110 incidents in twenty-one countries.¹⁴² One CIA counterterrorism cited Armenian terrorists as one of the most "effective" terror groups due to their estimated 87% fatality rate compared to the 14% average.¹⁴³

Armenian terrorism also escalated domestically within Turkey, but it did not dramatically alter the generally positive relations between the Turkish and Armenian communities. Turkish targets of Armenian terrorism included Turkish Airlines, tourist offices, and railway stations. The first domestic attack was in 1982; two Armenians launched an attack on Ankara's Esenboğa Airport which killed nine people and wounded seventy. In another incident, an Armenian self-immolated in Istanbul's Taksim Square. Notably, these Armenian militants were not Turkish citizens signaling that Armenian terrorism emanated from radicals within the diaspora community.¹⁴⁴ Within Turkey, Turks and Armenians lived in harmony and Armenians enjoyed political and cultural rights as a protected minority group. The Gregorian Christian population practiced freely,

¹⁴⁰ Mango, *Turkey and the War on Terror*, 11.

¹⁴¹ Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "List of the Turkish Diplomats/Officials and their Family Members Assassinated by Armenian Terrorists," <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/data/DISPOLITIKA/ermeni-terorune-sehit-verdigimiz-turk-diplomatlari.pdf>.

¹⁴² Mango, *Turkey and the War on Terror*, 12.

¹⁴³ Jack Anderson and Dale Van Atta, "French Refuse of Help Turks Track Terrorist," *Newsday*, October 31, 1986.

¹⁴⁴ Metin Demirsar, "Turkey's Armenian Community Shaken By Escalating Terrorism Against Turks," *Wall Street Journal*, August 26, 1982.

and in the 1980s, multiple Armenian-language schools existed. Despite these positive relations, rhetoric from the Armenian community in Turkey consistently expressed concern over relations souring if violence continued. Although uncommon, there were instances of retaliations against Armenian churches after the assassination of Turkish diplomats abroad. More common, however, were instances of police and military troops protecting Armenian churches and schools against possible attacks.¹⁴⁵

The contemporary media, statements from Armenian terrorists, and ASALA sympathizers make linkages between ASALA terrorism of the 1970s and 1980s and Armenian separatism at the end of the Ottoman Empire. One news article contends that the current Armenian-Turkish friction dates back to Ottoman times and this dissonance resulted in the Ottoman extermination of Armenians from Anatolia during this period.¹⁴⁶ Similarly, after the 1982 Ankara airport attack, an Armenian statement proclaimed that the attack was a response to “the Turkish fascist occupation of our land” and the terrorists lectured airport hostages on their demands for a separate Armenian state in eastern Turkey.¹⁴⁷ This statement and these demands are predicated on the belief that the contemporary borders of Turkey were illegitimate and the land is historically—and therefore rightfully—Armenian. At Gourgen Yanikian’s widely attended funeral in 1984, Yanikian’s attorney memorialized him by stating that, “In our heart of hearts, we know he had not committed an act of murder, he had committed an act of justice.”¹⁴⁸ Short of approving or condoning violence, members of the Armenian community praised Yanikian’s contribution toward bringing international attention to the injustices Armenians suffered. One eulogy epitomized Yanikian as a “symbol of our frustration.”¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁵ Demirsar, “Turkey’s Armenian Community Shaken By Escalating Terrorism Against Turks”; Richard West, “Armenians Held in Two Slayings Urged ‘War’ on Turk Envoys,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 30, 1973.

¹⁴⁶ Demirsar, “Turkey’s Armenian Community Shaken By Escalating Terrorism Against Turks.”

¹⁴⁷ “Six Killed in Attack in Ankara Airport,” *New York Times*, August 8, 1982.

¹⁴⁸ David Wharton, “Armenians Mourn Man Who Killed Two Turks,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 11, 1984.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

Reactions from policymakers indicate that Armenian terrorism within Turkey's territorial borders and Turkish counterterrorism measures increased correspondingly. However, the Turkish counterterrorism response to ASALA throughout the 1970s and early 1980s was largely ineffective. ASALA terrorism took a significant economic toll on Turkey with high costs to fortifying Turkish diplomatic facilities both within Turkey and abroad.¹⁵⁰ Turkish authorities were largely able to curtail ASALA from operating within Turkish territory, but these constraints instigated ASALA's proliferation through Armenian communities abroad. Expectedly, after ASALA's first major attack on Turkish territory with the 1982 Ankara airport attack, rhetoric from Turkish policymakers illustrates the reaction. Turkish President, General Kenan Evren, asserted that "All this blood will not go unrevenge[d] in history."¹⁵¹ Contemporary journalists interpreted this statement to not threaten Armenians living within Turkey, but through paramilitary operations against Armenian terrorists abroad. Although overt counterterrorism policies remained limited, there is evidence of covert targeted assassinations of Armenians sanctioned by the Turkish state during the 1970s and 1980s. Although there is not conclusive evidence, a contemporary investigative journalist suspected that a state-funded Turkish group could have orchestrated the assassination of ASALA leader Hagop Hagopian.¹⁵²

The inflection point for ASALA success came after the 1983 attack at Orly airport in Paris, France. In July 1983, Armenian militants detonated a bomb in front of the Turkish Airlines desk which killed eight tourists and wounded ninety people.¹⁵³ Among two other Armenian groups, ASALA claimed responsibility in order to avenge the "massacre of hundreds of thousands of Armenians in Turkey between 1915 and 1918."¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁰ Mango, *Turkey and the War on Terror*, 13.

¹⁵¹ Quoted in Demirsar, "Turkey's Armenian Community Shaken By Escalating Terrorism Against Turks."

¹⁵² This article highlights that other groups with motives included the Israelis and fellow Armenian terrorist groups. See Jack Anderson and Dale van Atta, "Turks Quietly Hit Back at Armenians," *Washington Post*, May 11, 1988.

¹⁵³ Maxime Gauin, "Remembering the Orly Attack," *The Journal of Turkish Weekly*, April 19, 2011.

¹⁵⁴ "5 Killed, 60 Hurt by Paris Bomb: Armenian Extremists Take Blame," *Los Angeles Times*, July 15, 1983.

ASALA had frequently operated on French territory, killing eighteen people between 1975 and 1983. The July 1983 attack was the most damaging terrorist attack since the end of World War II, and evoked a strong French response.¹⁵⁵ Turkey had been critical of French commitment to counterterror policies, and this distrust was evident in rhetoric from Turkish policymakers. After the Orly attack, General Evren issued a statement avowing that ~~the~~ “the patience of the Turkish nation is not unlimited.”¹⁵⁶ Furthermore, Foreign Minister İler Turkmen said, ~~the~~ “the Turkish nation’s retaliation will be as heavy as its patience has been great”¹⁵⁷ and criticized ~~those~~ “those who support or tolerate terrorism.”¹⁵⁸ These statements highlight how Turkish government officials perceived French tacit acceptance for Armenian terrorism due to their lack of full counterterror response. After years of ASALA attacks on French territory without a strong counterterror response, French authorities fully responded to the Orly airport bombing. These operations led to the dismantlement of ASALA in France and contributed to the ultimate downfall of the group in 1986.¹⁵⁹

Although damaging to Turkey’s relations with neighboring states and its image abroad, the isolated attacks and targeted assassinations of diplomats hardly constituted a tangible threat to Turkish existence without a connection to Armenian separatism from the end of the Ottoman Empire. In 2001, author Dr. Andrew Mango gave a presentation on the historical roots of Armenian terrorism at a meeting for the Promotion of Democratic Principles in Istanbul; an abstract of his talk is published on Turkish MFA website.¹⁶⁰ He argues that the Armenian nationalism during the end of the Ottoman Empire was the impetus for decades of adverse relations between Armenians and Turks that was in principle resolved at the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne. Mango asserts that

¹⁵⁵ Maxime Gauin, “Remembering the Orly Attack,” *The Journal of Turkish Weekly*, April 19, 2011.

¹⁵⁶ E.J. Dionne, Jr. “Death Toll Climbs to 6 in Orly Bombing,” *New York Times*, July 17, 1983.

¹⁵⁷ —“Killed, 60 Hurt by Paris Bomb: Armenian Extremists Take Blame,” *Los Angeles Times*.

¹⁵⁸ Dionne, “Death Toll Climbs to 6 in Orly Bombing,” *New York Times*.

¹⁵⁹ Gauin, —“Remembering the Orly Attack.”

¹⁶⁰ Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Abstract of a Talk on the Armenian Issue Given by Dr. Andrew Mango on March 15, 2001 at a Meeting of the Society for the Promotion of Democratic Principles (DIA) in Istanbul,” March 15, 2001, http://www.mfa.gov.tr/abstract-of-a-talk-on-the--issue---istanbul-by-dr_-andrew-mango.en.mfa.

Armenian nationalist politicians are trying to reopen this account ~~not~~ in the cause of historical accuracy, which should be left to historians,” and to ~~use~~ the past as a justification for irredentism.”¹⁶¹ The forces of separatism, irredentism, and challenges to territorial integrity remain relevant during the ASALA attacks of the 1970s and 1980s even though they were settled in the early Republican period.

Furthermore, scholar Fatma Müge Göçek makes the connection between fears of Armenian collusion with foreign actors in the early twentieth century and interpretations of ASALA terrorism within this same context of foreign support. She contends that Western states used ASALA assassinations of Turkish diplomats as a proxy to interfere in Turkish domestic affairs.¹⁶² As the entire Armenian community became framed as ~~terrorists~~” and the existence of the Armenian population within Turkey’s territorial borders was once again designated as a threat to the Turkish state, this actuated the belief that Sèvres was not dead, but merely dormant.¹⁶³ Sèvres could then be revived by Western powers as a future device for dividing Turkey. Additionally, the decade of Turkish diplomats as the targets of Armenian terrorism undermined Turkish foreign policy. This generation of Turkish diplomats innately mistrusted Armenians and resisted establishing diplomatic relations with Armenia. Göçek argues that these perceptions and reactions of ASALA terrorism as a continuation of Armenian rebellion at the end of the Ottoman Empire perpetrated and further entrenched the Sèvres Syndrome in the Turkish public.¹⁶⁴

3. Dissolution

The dedicated French counterterror response to ASALA terrorism after the Orly attack virtually ended the violence worldwide and hastened the group to dissolution. The large scale attack and the public backlash provided Yves Bonnet, the head of the French

¹⁶¹ Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Abstract of a talk on the Armenian issue given by Dr. Andrew Mango on March 15, 2001 at a meeting of the Society for the Promotion of Democratic Principles (DIA) in Istanbul.”

¹⁶² Göçek, *The Transformation of Turkey*, 173.

¹⁶³ Hovsepyan, “The Fears of Turkey: The Sèvres Syndrome,” 12.

¹⁶⁴ Göçek, *The Transformation of Turkey*, 151-53.

counter-terror and counter-intelligence police, the “green light.”¹⁶⁵ In the following months, the French police coordinated national police forces in massive operation to arrest the ASALA network within France. Although ASALA violence largely ended around the same time as the Orly attack, the dismantlement should also be attributed to FBI operations after the assassination of the Honorary Consul in Boston and strong protests from Ankara.¹⁶⁶ After the Orly attack, there were only two subsequent ASALA attacks with an unsuccessful attack on the Turkish embassy in Lisbon in June 1983 and an attack on the Turkish embassy in Ottawa in March 1985.¹⁶⁷ From 1988 to 1994, violent attacks believed to be another derivation of Armenian terror other than ASALA targeted Azerbaijan in retaliation for the Armenian-Azeri conflict.¹⁶⁸

The dissolution of ASALA resulted from a combination of factors that traditionally signal the end of terrorist movements: internal schisms, reduction of financial backing, loss of public support, the death of a charismatic leader, and the achievement of goals.¹⁶⁹ For ASALA, the end was spurred by the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, the death of their leader, internal schism, and the loss of financial backing from Armenian diaspora after violent attacks. As schisms continued, the group lost their political focus and was consumed by an internal power struggle. The leadership embarked on a spiral of assassinations that decimated the leadership and alienated supports. By 1988, Hagopian was targeted by multiple states and intelligence groups; he was murdered in Athens by unknown assailants.¹⁷⁰ Ultimately, the use of indiscriminate violence against civilians undermined Armenian public support that was vital for ASALA's existence.

¹⁶⁵ Gauin, —Remembering the Orly Attack,” 3.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 3-5.

¹⁶⁷ Mango, *Turkey and the War on Terror*, 12.

¹⁶⁸ Gauin, —Remembering the Orly Attack,” 5.

¹⁶⁹ Cronin, *How Terrorism Ends*, 8.

¹⁷⁰ Anderson and Van Atta, —Turks Quietly Hit Back at Armenians.”

4. Goals and Territorial Claims

ASALA's key goals were threefold: force the Turkish government to recognize the 1915 Armenian genocide; obtain Turkish payment of reparations for the genocide; and achieve Turkish cession of the land necessary to create the Armenia promised in the Treaty of Sèvres.¹⁷¹ Founder and leader Hagop Hagopian further articulated in a 1983 interview:

We demand the clear and unequivocal recognition of the massacres, and of our right to settle on our own soil, and there to establish our own nation. We are prepared for the revolutionary burden this imposes upon us, however bloody the price that we might pay.¹⁷²

The scope of these goals cast Turkey as the target due to the perceived imperial nature of historic Ottoman and Turkish oppression and domination of the Armenian population in Anatolia. ASALA members frequently referenced these goals after an attack by claiming responsibility through a phone call or letter.¹⁷³ In addition, a short term goal of Armenian terrorists was the release of Armenian prisoners from foreign prisons. After multiple attacks, Armenian militants issued statements that the violence would continue in countries such as the United States, Canada, France, Britain, Switzerland, and Sweden if Armenian terrorists were not released.¹⁷⁴

ASALA's goals required and sought support from the ethnic Armenians both within Turkey's borders and internationally. In the words of Hagopian, "[Our] primary objectives are to introduce the Armenian cause to world public opinion, and make the world feel that there is a desolate people that lacks a homeland or identity, and to arouse the national feeling of the Armenian diaspora."¹⁷⁵ Initially, the group sought to unify Armenians living in diaspora communities abroad who had gained wealth and stature.

¹⁷¹ In 1981, ASALA's political goals were outlined in an eight-point political program that was created by the leadership of Armenian popular movements." For the full list, see Kurz and Merari, *ASALA*, 20-21.

¹⁷² Quoted in Kurz and Merari, *ASALA*, 19.

¹⁷³ For examples, see multiple news articles on ASALA attacks between 1973 and 1983 by journalists such as Richard West, Jack Anderson, and Hugh Pope.

¹⁷⁴ "6 Killed in Attack in Ankara Airport," *New York Times*, August 8, 1982.

¹⁷⁵ Quoted in Mango, *Turkey and the War on Terror*, 11.

Without a territorial homeland, Armenian nationalists attempted to combat assimilation that would weaken their population. The Armenian genocide was utilized as a common platform to mobilize the diaspora population in order to promote ethnic cohesion and prevent assimilation.¹⁷⁶ It is important to separate the goals of ASALA from the goals of peaceful Armenian political or nationalist groups. More expansive than the goals of achieving international recognition of the Armenian genocide, ASALA also sought an independent Armenian state based on historic territory. While Turkish recognition of the genocide would be a disheartening blow for the national psyche, the creation of an Armenian state on Anatolian territory is an existential threat to Turkey's territorial existence.

ASALA's political claim for the creation of a homeland on historic Armenian territory was the point on the platform most feared by Turkish leaders. Striking at the core of Turkish nationalism based on Wilsonian self-determination and the promise of ~~secure~~ sovereignty," Armenian militants used the same Wilsonian justifications for their statehood claims. For example, they reiterated that it is ~~the~~ cornerstone and most important element for our cause" and that Armenians have ~~the~~ right...to live in their homeland and the right to self-determination."¹⁷⁷ If Turkish claims were legitimate, why were Armenian claims not? Beyond principles, ASALA's territorial claims had a historical basis in the Treaty of Sèvres. The Treaty of Sèvres provided Western validation that Armenian claims to the western Anatolia of Erzurum, Bitlis, and Van were authentic. Furthermore, ASALA stated that its principle aim was to ~~liberate~~ Western Armenia [Turkey] and join it to today's liberated Soviet Armenia, forming an integral, revolutionary Armenia."¹⁷⁸ Decades after the dissolution of ASALA, Foreign Minister Davutoğlu asserted in 2009 that ~~Neither~~ Armenia, nor any other country will dare to present territorial demands to Turkey."¹⁷⁹ Instead of analyzing the normalization of

¹⁷⁶ Mango, *Turkey and the War on Terror*, 11.

¹⁷⁷ Quoted in Michael M. Gunter, *Armenian History and the Question of Genocide* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 45.

¹⁷⁸ Quoted in Gunter, ~~—~~Armenian Terrorism," 6.

¹⁷⁹ Quoted in Hovsepyan, ~~—~~The Fears of Turkey: The Sèvres Syndrome," 18.

Turkish-Armenian foreign relations in a contemporary context, the Sèvres Syndrome narrows the view to the historical anxieties of the Ottoman Empire.

Although ASALA was disbanded in 1986, there has been intermittent evidence of violence from Armenian terrorists in the following decades. In 1991, ASALA claimed responsibility for an attack on the Turkish ambassador to Hungary. Contrary to the previous general support from the Armenian community, this attack was met with condemnation. The criticism was not only regarding violence, but also distain for the revival of Ottoman injustices through violence. By the 1990s, the Armenian government began to change its official position by moving closer to dropping territorial claims on eastern Turkey and references to the Armenian genocide. This shift is evidenced in Armenian statements; Akin Gonen, a state minister and government spokesman, stated that “we now want bygones to be bygones, to start again in this new era.”¹⁸⁰ Instead of emphasizing the past and underscoring how the historical legacies shape present policy, these shifts illustrate a willingness to move past reactions to Ottoman era injustices.

5. International Support

International support was integral to ASALA’s existence, success, and survival. The expanding scope of ASALA’s goals combined with the limited support from the Armenian community provided the logistical necessity for ASALA’s dependence on foreign support. Not only did ASALA seek foreign support, but states supported ASALA due to their “own political axe to grind with Turkey” and used ASALA as a means to attain their own limited ends.¹⁸¹ In order to achieve their goals, ASALA sought to instigate the formation of coalitions and networks among the Armenian community, creating a united front. ASALA specifically appealed to the Armenian diaspora in Europe and the United States in an attempt to awaken international support and unity of Armenian national aspirations. One strategy for mobilizing the Armenian diaspora was demonstrations outside Armenian consulates on Genocide Day (April 24).¹⁸²

¹⁸⁰ Hugh Pope, “Armenian Terrorist Group Tries to Kill Turkish Envoy,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 21, 1991.

¹⁸¹ Kurz and Merari, *ASALA*, 46.

¹⁸² Bobelian, *Children of Armenia*, 153-63.

From the onset, Armenian terrorists were supported by Palestinians in Lebanon and Syria. Armenian nationalism took a violent turn in 1975 when the Armenian support during the Lebanese civil war shifted from Christian groups to the PLO. Lebanon provided a safe haven for training and logistical support until Israel expelled the PLO from Beirut in 1982. Although initial logistical support for ASALA originated from the PLO, evidence exists that Syria later hosted training camps independent of Palestinian influence. It is likely that Syrian support for Armenian terrorism was a result of lingering resentment over the 1939 Turkish annexation of Hatay. In 1983, Turkey cited Syrian support for ASALA as the justification for building a dam on the Euphrates River that caused water shortages in Syria—a policy that has shaped the trajectory of subsequent Turkish-Syrian relations.¹⁸³

Decreased Lebanese, Palestinian, and Syrian support for ASALA drove the group to take sanctuary in the France's liberal political environment. France is home to a large Armenian diaspora community and was sympathetic to the lack of Turkish recognition for the 1915 genocide.¹⁸⁴ Throughout the 1970s and early 1980s, France was a haven for ASALA terrorists and the group was able to operate under implicit approval and tolerance from French authorities. After a spate of attacks in the early 1980s, journalists reported that the French "cut a deal"; ASALA senior leader, Monte Melkonian, would be released and ASALA would stop bombings on French territory.¹⁸⁵ This tenuous truce ended in 1983 as a result of ASALA's major attack on Orly Airport. While serving a life sentence for his role in the 1983 attack, ASALA member Varadjian Garbidjian, claimed that the bomb at Orly Airport was intended to detonate on the Turkish Airlines flight, not in the French airport.¹⁸⁶ Regardless, distrust remains in French-Turkish relations on Armenian issues and impedes cooperation; in the late 1980s France allegedly refused to share a picture of Hagopian to aid Turkish counterterror efforts.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸³ Mango, *Turkey and the War on Terror*, 11-12; Kurz and Merari, *ASALA*, 48, 63.

¹⁸⁴ Kurz and Merari, *ASALA*, 58.

¹⁸⁵ Jack Anderson and Dale Van Atta, "Lebanese Is Key to Bombings Rocking France," *Newsday*, October 29, 1986.

¹⁸⁶ Mango, *Turkey and the War on Terror*, 7.

¹⁸⁷ Anderson and Van Atta, "French Refuse of Help Turks Track Terrorist"

The Soviets provided support to ASALA on the basis of Cold War desires to undermine NATO ally Turkey, but backing was limited due to ASALA's nationalist desire to mobilize Soviet Armenians. A point on ASALA's platform included convincing the Soviet Union to directly assist ASALA by creating a revolutionary movement to destroy "Turkish colonialism."¹⁸⁸ ASALA's direct appeal for Soviet intervention would understandably disquiet Turkish leaders' ideological anxieties as well as foreign policy concerns. Turkey territorial anxieties regarding foreign interference from the Soviet Union already existed due to the post-World War II Soviet claims on Kars, Ardahan, and Artvin. Since these territorial claims strike at the heart of the Sèvres Syndrome, Turkish leaders viewed ASALA as under Soviet influence and as a direct territorial threat to the state. To balance the international system during the Cold War, Soviet leaders likely provided indirect logistical support through Syrian or Palestinian third parties. Soviet leaders, moreover, only provided limited support since ASALA sought a territorial homeland that could arouse nationalist and separatist interests damaging to Soviet territorial integrity.¹⁸⁹

C. PKK

During the same time period, another ethnic minority within Turkey—the Kurds—also presented a perceived existential territorial threat to the state. Unlike the Armenians who were a protected minority due to their Christian religion, the Muslim Kurds were not afforded minority rights. In the context of denying the Kurds as a separate ethnic group, Kurdish nationalism rose as suppression increased. As seen in the goals and territorial claims, foreign influence, state response, and pre-1999 movement toward peace, the struggle between the Turkish state and the PKK embodies the central features of Turkish nationalism in the Republican period: ultimate protection of territorial integrity at the expense of the suppression of minority rights.¹⁹⁰ The state's ability to

¹⁸⁸ Kurz and Merari, *ASALA*, 21.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 21, 47.

¹⁹⁰ Taşpınar, *Kurdish Nationalism and Political Islam in Turkey*, 97.

continue to frame the PKK as supported by external factors provided the Turkish security establishment a justification for military force against the Kurds.¹⁹¹

Despite the historically disorganized and ineffective nature of Kurdish rebellions, Turkish politicians have historically identified demonstrations of Kurdish nationalism as a threat to Turkish sovereignty due to the foundational territorial focus of Turkish nationalism. The consolidation of the Turkish state involved the suppression of Kurdish rebellions before Turkey's territorial borders were fully solidified and the Turkish nationalist identity was fully established. It is important to note that Kurdish separatism did not pose a threat to Ottoman territorial sovereignty since Kurdish nationalism did not emerge until the Republican period.¹⁹² It is only after the shift in the definition of Turkish nationalism that Kurdish movements began to be seen as a threat by Turkish leaders. Therefore, even weak and disjointed efforts from ethnic minorities were considered ~~an~~ existential threat to the very foundations of the nascent nation-state."¹⁹³

The connection between the Kurdish rebellions of the early Republican period and the onset of Kurdish political violence in the 1970s provides the basis for the state's perceived existential threat from the PKK. The PKK operated within the mountainous region where the influence of the central government was traditionally weak. By operating in the same regions as the rebellions at the end of the Ottoman Empire, the PKK inherited the tradition of separatist violence against the state. In its formative years, the PKK was too weak to pose a genuine threat to Turkish security forces and the Kurdish revolutionaries were considered ~~bandits~~.¹⁹⁴ By 1984, the PKK began to earnestly pursue their separatist agenda by attacking state targets. After decades of relative peace with the Kurdish community, the Turkish government was facing the first military challenge to the state since the Kurdish rebellions of the 1920s and 1930s.¹⁹⁴ The repression of the 1970s was the catalyst for a level of unity unseen in the early Kurdish rebellions, creating a more significant armed threat from revolutionary Kurdish groups.

¹⁹¹ Göçek, *The Transformation of Turkey*, 154.

¹⁹² Taşpınar, *Kurdish Nationalism and Political Islam in Turkey*, 2, 68.

¹⁹³ Ibid., 65.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 100-101.

The previously suppressed Kurdish nationalism was able to take root within the context of Marxism and the leftist ideology of the 1970s. From 1938 through the establishment of the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Turkey (TKDP) in 1965, no Kurdish nationalist parties existed within Turkey.¹⁹⁵ One explanation for the resurgence is that after a period of Kurdish liberalization in the post-World War II democratization process, the 1970s ushered in an era of Kurdish repression. By the 1980 military coup and the 1982 Constitution, the Turkish state institutionalized the denial of Kurds as a separate ethnicity from Turkish and began to suppress leftist and nationalist movements within the Kurdish community. The previous associations between leftist groups and Kurdish nationalists weakened as Kurdish groups sought to independently represent their own rights.¹⁹⁶ A third account is that the Kurdish nationalist movement radicalized during the violence of the Turkish economic and political crisis in the 1970s.¹⁹⁷ The increase in Kurdish nationalism has been categorized as a “revival” of the early Republican Kurdish movement.¹⁹⁸ The combination of the social, economic, and political factors contributed toward the radicalization of Kurdish nationalism and the transformation of the PKK into a terrorist organization.

1. Origins of the PKK

In *Blood and Belief*, author Aliza Marcus outlines the origins of the PKK. The PKK emerged at the intersection of Marxist, leftist groups, and the Kurdish nationalist movement. The founder, Abdullah (Apo) Öcalan was a Kurd from Turkey’s Urfa region and gained support while studying political science at Ankara University. In 1974, a small group of lower-class Kurds formed the Ankara Democratic Higher Education Association (ADYÖD), but the group quickly disbanded as Öcalan sought to use the group to further his illegal activities. The low socioeconomic status of the group spurred nationalist action rather than ideological sophistication previously seen in other Marxist

¹⁹⁵ Aliza Marcus, *Blood and Belief: The PKK and the Kurdish Fight for Independence* (New York: NYU Press, 2009), 20.

¹⁹⁶ Taşpınar, *Kurdish Nationalism and Political Islam in Turkey*, 97-98.

¹⁹⁷ Jung, “The Sèvres Syndrome,” 11.

¹⁹⁸ McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds*, 397.

groups. Since the Turkish socialist organizations were unwilling to fully support Kurdish grievances, Öcalan formed a new group—the beginnings of the PKK—that pursued Kurdish nationalism as the primary rallying point. Still, the nascent PKK retained its leftist ideology, which dictated aspects of PKK organization and goals throughout its existence. By 1978, the PKK was formally established in the Lice district of Diyarbakır with a Central Committee of seven to eight core members, including Abdullah Öcalan (General Secretary), Kesire Yildirim, Şahin Dönmez, Cemil Bayık, Mehmet Karasungur, Mazlum Doğan, and Mehmet Hayri Durmuş. Of these founding members, many would either abandon the PKK, be killed during in-fighting, or were imprisoned.¹⁹⁹

Just prior to the 1980 military coup in Turkey, Öcalan sought refuge amongst the Palestinian groups operating within Syria to avoid the mass arrests of political dissidents in Turkey. Moving underground, the PKK began to establish bases in southeastern Turkey and the Kurdish territories of northern Iraq and benefited from the porous borders caused by the chaos of the Iran-Iraq War. In the early 1980s, the PKK held multiple party congresses to develop its strategic defenses and return to Turkish territory. For typical Kurds, the atmosphere in Turkey became increasingly dire; the civilian leadership instituted laws stating that every citizen of Turkey was a Turk and under special law 2932, Kurdish languages were banned within Turkey.²⁰⁰ The denial of even basic cultural and political rights contributed to increased Kurdish public support for the PKK. In 1983, PKK militants killed three Turkish soldiers which resulted in Turkish airstrikes in Iraqi territory at the permission of Iraqi authorities. By 1984, PKK militants attacked Turkish security utilizing guerrilla-war tactics, although early attacks were categorized as basic hit-and-run tactics.²⁰¹

Before discussing the PKK activities, it is important to note that the PKK represent the margins of Kurdish nationalism. The majority of Kurds seek increased political and cultural rights and prosperity for rural southeastern Turkey. Also, only a

¹⁹⁹ See Section I in Marcus, *Blood and Belief*, 15-88.

²⁰⁰ Marcus, *Blood and Belief*, 84-85.

²⁰¹ Sam Cohen, “Turkey’s Kurdish campaign heats up,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, March 11, 1987.

small fraction of Kurds espouse the PKK's use of violence since the Marxist ideology of the early PKK failed to gain traction with the Sunni Muslim Kurdish population. For example, in 1989 Ismail Hakki Onal, a Kurdish member of the Turkish Parliament, spoke on behalf of the general Kurdish population: ~~Kurds~~ don't want to establish a separate state... We just want out [*sic*] culture."²⁰² Despite this reality, ~~the~~ Kemalist elite views Kurdish nationalism... almost naturally through the prism of the Sèvres Syndrome."²⁰³ Instead of viewing terrorism and PKK militants as the territorial threats to the state, the Sèvres Syndrome generalizes the threat to all Kurds, regardless of their sympathies. In one assessment, this has led to a reaction from Turkish authorities that gives the PKK the implicit authority and power to set the Kurdish agenda in the public sphere.²⁰⁴ Prior to the 1980s, the ~~Kurdish~~ "Question" was discussed in mainstream news in regard to the Kurdish resistance in Iraq led by Mustafa Barzani. The plight of the Turkish Kurds surfaced in press reports during the 1980s, largely in response to the violence involved with the PKK.²⁰⁵

2. PKK Activities and State Response

After the onset of violence in 1984, the PKK defined its struggle as a national war of liberation involving propaganda, attacks against state collaborators, and widespread riots and boycotts. At the third party congress in 1986, PKK leadership sought to expand the ranks of the foot soldiers in order to increase the number of attacks. By 1987, contemporary newspaper reports identified a ~~Kurdish~~ "resurgence" and a ~~recent~~ escalation in Kurdish guerilla attacks."²⁰⁶ The situation continued to securitize as the Turkish government mandated the Emergency Rule Law (OHAL) in eleven provinces in southeastern Turkey. This measure granted sweeping extrajudicial powers to Turkish

²⁰² Clyde Haberman, ~~For~~ "Turkey's Kurds, Fragile Gains," *New York Times*, November 3, 1989.

²⁰³ Jung, ~~The~~ "Sèvres Syndrome," 11.

²⁰⁴ Haberman, ~~For~~ "Turkey's Kurds, Fragile Gains."

²⁰⁵ William Safire of the *New York Times* published multiple articles on Kurdish issues in the 1970s and 1980s. For one example, see William Safire, ~~The~~ "Kurdish Question," *New York Times*, September 20, 1979.

²⁰⁶ Cohen, ~~Turkey's~~ "Kurdish campaign heats up"; Thomas Goltz, ~~Signs~~ "Turkey Is Beginning to Be Realistic about the Kurds," *Toronto Star*, August 8, 1987.

authorities in an effort to restore public order. Instead of guaranteeing public safety, OHAL measures infringed on human rights and ideals of justice with long periods of pretrial detention.²⁰⁷ Additionally, Turkish authorities introduced a village-guard system to augment traditional defense against the PKK. During this time, rhetoric from Turkish journalists and policymakers illustrated that this violence was viewed on the same continuum as earlier Kurdish violent rebellions. For example, Turkish journalist İsmet İmset related the 1980s guard system to the Ottoman *Hamidiye* regiments that functioned to preserve Kurdish tribal allegiance to central authorities.²⁰⁸

The PKK's tactics sought to weaken Turkish authority through a combination of destroying state infrastructure and coercing the Kurdish public to support the PKK. To undermine the ability of the state to provide public services, PKK targeted government employees including teachers, prayer leaders, doctors, mayors; government facilities such as health centers, post offices, bridges; and state-owned industry including road construction, mining machinery, and irrigation facilities. Furthermore, the PKK sought to damage tourism in Turkish by attacking organizations and locations facilitating to the tourist industry, kidnapping tourists, and detonating bombs that killed tourists.²⁰⁹ In southeastern Turkey, the PKK established itself as the alternative source of authority through the submission of villagers through brutal raids.

As both public support in Eastern Turkey and the death toll from PKK violence increased, the military continued to securitize the threat and assumed *«earte blanche»* powers to more effectively combat the PKK. One example was the Anti-terror Law of 1991 which broadly defined terrorist acts and enemies of the state to encompass any act that threatened the supremacy of the state.²¹⁰ For example, Article 8 stated that “Written propaganda, assemblies, meetings and demonstrations aimed at damaging the indivisible unity of the Turkish Republic with its territory and nation are prohibited regardless of

²⁰⁷ Ünal, *Counterterrorism in Turkey*, 15; 55-57.

²⁰⁸ Kemal Kirişçi and Gareth M. Winrow, *The Kurdish Question and Turkey: An Example of a Trans-state Ethnic Conflict* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 129.

²⁰⁹ Mango, *Turkey and the War on Terror*, 39; Kirişçi and Winrow, *The Kurdish Question and Turkey*, 127.

²¹⁰ Kirişçi and Winrow, *The Kurdish Question and Turkey*, 127-28.

methods, intentions and ideas behind them.”²¹¹ Under this framework, calls for Kurdish cultural rights could be characterized as terrorism. Therefore, the Turkish state denied even modest Kurdish cultural rights and continued to rely on military force due to the perception that even the smallest concession would lead to an opening, resulting in Kurdish statehood.²¹² This is best iterated by a Turkish military statement:

The PKK intends first to raise the debate of cultural and social reforms for the Kurds. If this is tolerated, the PKK will raise the issue of autonomy or a federation. If this is tolerated, it will create an independent Kurdish state. And, again if nothing is done, Kurds living in four countries will unite and create the true Independent Kurdistan. Thus, even pursuing language rights for Kurds in turkey—let alone Kurdish radio and television broadcasts—is to be regarded as serving the PKK’s interests. Period.²¹³

Similarly, President Süleyman Demirel asserted that concessions would result in —compromise after compromise with no end.”²¹⁴ This rhetoric illustrates the reaction of the military and political leadership directly conflated Kurdish cultural rights with the establishment of an independent Kurdistan. Although these statements do not directly reference the Treaty of Sèvres, the jump from cultural rights to Kurdish statehood illustrates that Turkish military and political leaders are viewing Kurdish issues through the Sèvres Syndrome.

By the 1990s, Kurdish groups and the PKK alike disassociated from calls for independence and Kurdish statehood. Notably, Öcalan stated in a 1990 interview: —There’s no question of separating from Turkey. My people need Turkey: we can’t split for at least 40 years...unity will bring strength.”²¹⁵ After a decade of violence, Turkish authorities were unable to embrace this shift to legal means as legitimate. In 1989, a *New York Times* reporter identified that Turkey could not square its commitment to

²¹¹ Quoted in Taşpınar, *Kurdish Nationalism and Political Islam in Turkey*, 103.

²¹² Ibid., 105.

²¹³ Quoted in Gunter, *The Kurds and the Future of Turkey*, 80.

²¹⁴ Quoted in Stephen Kinzer, —Kurds Fashion Two Identities in a Fearful Turkey,” *New York Times*, July 27, 1997.

²¹⁵ Quoted in Paul J. White, *Primitive Rebels or Revolutionary Modernizers? The Kurdish national movement in Turkey* (New York: Zed Books, 2000), 163. In another example, Öcalan stated, —They say we are all separatists and want to separate. This is nonsense! We have a 900-year togetherness with Turkey.” Quoted in White, *Primitive Rebels or Revolutionary Modernizers?*, 200n5.

–Turkishness” and territorial integrity with Kurdish cultural rights until PKK violence waned.²¹⁶ In an unprecedented move for a head of state, President Özal instigated a Kurdish opening. The Turkish government legalized spoken Kurdish; offered amnesty to Kurdish militants, including Öcalan; released political prisoners; and Özal even revealed his own Kurdish heritage.²¹⁷ These moderations led to negotiations with the PKK, but the brief 1993 ceasefire between Turkey and the PKK ended when Özal suddenly died in office. According to contemporary newspaper reports, the Turkish government was generally unwilling to acquiesce to Öcalan’s demands for Kurdish cultural rights and federalism due to the preponderance of the Turkish military. Reportedly, the Turkish government believed that Turkish soldiers outnumbered Kurdish militants ten to one; Öcalan believed that he has the support of Turkey’s Kurdish population and at least toleration from neighboring states.²¹⁸ Although a separate Kurdish identity had been propagated and encouraged within Turkey, the state response reinforced this and strengthened Kurdish nationalism. Instead of decreasing the violence, the use of military force provided the PKK with a narrative of state repression, resulting in publicity and enlarged support from the population.²¹⁹

After Özal died, the Turkish government reverted to securitization as violence reached the level of civil war in southeastern Turkey. PKK violence reached unforeseen levels equivalent with a civil war in southeastern Turkey; thousands of civilians died and Turkish forces suffered significant military setbacks.²²⁰ The death toll from 1984–1991 was 4,000 people and from 1992–1995 it scaled to 21,000 people.²²¹ Still, Turkish leaders continued to affirm the Turkish military’s role in managing the PKK: in 1993, Prime Minister Demirel signaled that “just security forces” will manage the PKK and

²¹⁶ Haberman, “For Turkey’s Kurds, Fragile Gains.”

²¹⁷ White, *Primitive Rebels or Revolutionary Modernizers?*, 162.

²¹⁸ Hugh Pope, “Kurds declare all-out war on Turks; End of peace process as PKK threatens ‘most ferocious campaign’ in nine-year battle,” *The Independent (London)*, June 9, 1993.

²¹⁹ Daniel Byman, “The logic of ethnic terrorism,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 21, no. 2 (1998): 155.

²²⁰ Kirişçi and Winrow, *The Kurdish Question and Turkey*, 127.

²²¹ Taşpınar, *Kurdish Nationalism and Political Islam in Turkey*, 106.

Defense Minister Nezvat Ayaz stated, “The Government has nothing to do with the operational developments because it is the security forces that have to fight against terrorism.”²²² By 1994, defense spending for emergency rule totaled \$11.1 billion and constituted a significant part of Turkish GDP.²²³ The tide began to turn in 1995 when the Turkish military’s chief of staff assumed supreme authority over the PKK counterterrorism strategy. The Turkish military deployed 35,000 troops into eastern Anatolia and northern Iraq in the largest military operation since the start of the Kurdish insurrection, but this campaign only resulted in marginal gains.²²⁴ By 1997, Turkish military and intelligence officers admitted that the conflict could not be resolved militarily.²²⁵ Some Turkish leaders favored dialogue, but top leaders rejected these discussions. In 1996, Defense Minister Turhan Tayan stated, “the state will not enter into bargaining with the separatist bandits” and then-Democratic Left Party (DSP) leader Bulent Ecevit argued that PKK supporters ranging from the Kurdish Parliament to foreigners aspired to speak for the Kurds and revive the Sèvres Treaty.²²⁶ These references to both Sèvres and separatism expound how a viable solution remained out of reach.

The PKK’s activities and the Turkish counterterrorism response illustrates that early Republican interpretations of Kurdish nationalist and separatism remain relevant throughout the century. The Treaty of Sèvres and the subsequent Sèvres Syndrome perpetuates the belief that Turkey is encircled by both domestic and foreign enemies that aim to destroy the state. Turkey’s former general chief of staff Hüseyin Kivrikoğlu stated that “the Turkish Armed Forces are prepared to fight against all kinds of terrorism and fundamentalism as well as against internal and external threats regardless what it

²²² Quoted in Alan Cowell, “Turkey Opts for Raw Force in Fight Against Kurds,” *New York Times*, September 7, 1992.

²²³ Kirişçi and Winrow, *The Kurdish Question and Turkey*, 130.

²²⁴ David Rohde, “Might Makes Flight in Two Rebel Wars: Turkey’s military fails to find many PKK Kurd rebels,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, April 3, 1995; Gunter, *The Kurds and the Future of Turkey*, 83-84.

²²⁵ Kinzer, “Kurds Fashion Two Identities in a Fearful Turkey.”

²²⁶ Quoted in Ayla Ganioglu, “Coalition split on PKK,” *Hürriyet Daily News*, July 8, 1996.

costs.”²²⁷ The Sèvres Syndrome is also evident in the public realm; a 1994 letter to the editor of the *Washington Post* argued that Turkish concessions to Kurds were impossible due to Turkey’s foundational history based on sovereignty and protection of its territorial integrity.²²⁸ Connecting the PKK with Kurdish separatism in the early Republican period, in 1996 Defense Minister Turhan Tayan avowed, “The state will not enter into bargaining with the separatist bandits.”²²⁹ A decade after its foundation, the rhetorical responses from both policymakers and the public illustrates that the Turkish state was still unable to reconcile the recognition of Muslim minorities within Turkish territorial borders and preservation of the unitary nature of Turkish nationalism.²³⁰

In the late 1990s, an opening on the discussion from Turkish policymakers resulted in a decrease in PKK violence. These reforms were spurred by the Turkish government’s realization that the price was too high in terms of lives lost, military expenditures, and damage to the Turkish image abroad as European Union membership talks stalled. Moderations included the recognition of Nevruz, legitimizing the Kurdish language and Kurdish music, and reforming emergency laws. Furthermore, some Turkish politicians adopted the pan-Islamic stance that identified Kurds as fellow Muslims which contributed to more moderate views. Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan stated, “There is nothing more absurd than ethnic differentiation among Muslim brothers.”²³¹ Likewise, then-Refah Party Deputy Chairman Abdullah Gül connected the communal relations between Kurds and Turks during the Ottoman Empire as evidence that a common Muslim identity can unite the two groups.²³² These Ottoman connections reference notions of identity devoid of the ethnic distinction that emerged during the early Republic’s struggles with separatism and territorial integrity.

²²⁷ Quoted in Jung, “The Sèvres Syndrome,” 4.

²²⁸ Serap Rada letter to the editor, “Kurdish Autonomy, Turkish Sovereignty,” *Washington Post*, December 17, 1994.

²²⁹ Quoted in Ayla Ganioglu, “Coalition split on PKK,” *Hürriyet Daily News*, July 8, 1996.

²³⁰ Taşpınar, *Kurdish Nationalism and Political Islam in Turkey*, 111.

²³¹ Quoted in Gunter, *The Kurds and the Future of Turkey*, 85.

²³² *Ibid.*, 85.

In the public sphere, editorials and reports in the late 1990s from both Turkish and international newspapers began to openly question the efficacy of repressing the Kurdish identity. For example, as the tide was beginning to turn in 1995, a columnist for the Turkish daily newspaper *Milliyet* illustrated the legitimate injustices of the Kurds through this quip: “What if it were said that in Kurdey there were no Turks and everyone in fact was a Kurd and those who thought themselves Turks were, in fact, sea Kurds.”²³³ In the late 1990s, the *Christian Science Monitor* printed an article critical of the Turkish human rights abuses, highlighting how states throughout Europe and Asia and with states such as Austria, Belgium, Italy, the Netherlands, and Russia sympathetically hosted sessions of the Kurdish Parliament “in exile.”²³⁴ These two examples serve as illustrations of the start of international public discussions on Kurdish issues from writers and policymakers who do not view Kurdish nationalism through the lens of Sèvres.

3. Öcalan’s Arrest

The most significant blow to the PKK came in 1999 with the capture of Öcalan—the uncontested leader since the group’s formation. As Turkey increased the pressure on Syria to stop providing Öcalan sanctuary on Syrian territory, Öcalan was forced to leave Syria in 1998. He transited between Italy, Russia, and Greece before seeking political asylum on a Greek diplomatic compound in Kenya. As the international community put pressure on Greece to surrender the PKK leader, Öcalan frantically pursued other avenues for asylum. After receiving news of Holland’s acceptance, he was lured into a plot devised by Turkish officials to capture and arrest him.²³⁵

In Turkey, the nature of Öcalan’s capture was laced with suspicion characterized by the Sèvres Syndrome. Although Syria’s expulsion of Öcalan should have been a victory for Turkey, the publicity surrounding his capture and Italy’s refusal to extradite him resulted in increased awareness and sympathy for the Kurdish cause.²³⁶ In 1998,

²³³ Quoted in Marcus, *Blood and Belief*, 249. This quote plays on the reference to Kurds as “mountain Turks.”

²³⁴ Malik, “It’s the Kurds’ turn for world recognition,” *Christian Science Monitor*.

²³⁵ Marcus, *Blood and Belief*, 277.

²³⁶ Evidence of increased awareness and publicity can be seen in multiple articles in 1998 and 1999.

Turkey made statements that directly linked the Treaty of Sèvres with European attitudes toward Öcalan. First, Prime Minister Mesut Yilmaz made this reference in regards to Öcalan's capture: "I don't like to say this, but some European countries are longing for a revival of Sèvres...all these efforts are in vain."²³⁷ Incoming Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit reiterated, "Their ambition for a new Sèvres will not be fulfilled."²³⁸ Additionally, in 1998 Turkish citizens reacted to Italian shelter of Öcalan by boycotting Italian items to protesting with signs with slogans such as "Turkey Will Never be Divided" and "No to Sèvres!"²³⁹

Another example of the relevance of early Republican interpretations of dissent was the connections between Kurdish separatist Sheik Said and PKK leader Öcalan. Ironically, Öcalan's death sentence was issued on the seventy fourth anniversary of Sheik Said's death sentence. In Stephen Kinzer's 1999 article, he highlights the parallels between the movements and also interviews likeminded Turks, including a Kurdish engineer who states, "The same thing that is happening in 1925 is happening today."²⁴⁰ These examples illustrate that the reactions to the Sèvres Syndrome assume many forms: it can manifest through direct reference to the Treaty of Sèvres or through the belief that contemporary internal enemies are linked to the same nationalism that threatened Turkey during the early Republican period.

4. Goals and Territorial Claims

The PKK's ideology has shifted from its inception to Öcalan's capture, and will likely continue to evolve throughout the PKK's existence. At its core, the PKK initially sought a Kurdish state based on Marxist-Leninist principles. The group's target audience—the economically marginalized Kurds of southeastern Turkey—were not swayed by theories of class conflict. Öcalan leveraged the political reality and instead

²³⁷ Quoted in Kinzer, "Turks See Throwback to Partition in Europe's Focus on Kurds."

²³⁸ Quoted in Ibid.

²³⁹ Stephen Kinzer, "Turks haunted by treaty forgotten by most nations; Kurdish rebels' desire to create a separate state resurrects painful memories of a humiliation," *The Globe and Mail*, December 9, 1998.

²⁴⁰ Stephen Kinzer, "Rebel Trial In Turkey Evokes 1925 Case," *New York Times*, July 10, 1999.

used historical grievances surrounding Kurdish nationalism as the mobilizing tool among the base of support. Additionally, socialism lost ideological popularity after the fall of the Soviet Union and Öcalan reduced his outward socialist leanings. Notably, the 1995 Congress approved removing the hammer and sickle from the PKK flag.²⁴¹

The core goals of the PKK are Kurdish self-determination, a unified separate state of Kurdistan, and protection of Kurdish political and cultural rights. In response to the aforementioned developments, Öcalan and the PKK Congress dramatically shifted its goals in the late 1990s and agreed to accept Turkey's existing borders if Turkish authorities supported Kurdish cultural rights and democratic political formations.²⁴² The evolution of Kurdish goals indicates that territory has a different meaning for the Kurds. Although territory is undeniably important toward accomplishing their goals, ultimately, recognition and protection of the Kurdish identity has proven to be the most critical and enduring objective.

In his own writing, Öcalan's views on Turkish territory shed light on the interactions between PKK goals and Turkish territorial anxieties. Öcalan asserts that Turkish nationalism must move past the Kemalist ties to territory and interpretations that Turkish territory belongs solely to the Turkish ethnicity. He also argues that the PKK emerged to resolve the question: Do the Kurds exist? He concedes that democratic resolution of this issue is impossible within the founding structure of the Republic. Instead of referencing the Treaty of Sèvres to provide his claims legitimacy, he makes multiple allusions to the National Pact—the foundational document for Turkey's definition of its territorial claims.²⁴³ Interestingly, Öcalan makes indirect references to the Turkish policymakers' Sèvres Syndrome by highlighting that Turkey continues to re-live the period from 1920—1925 and referencing the ~~in~~terpretation of the circular process of events."²⁴⁴

²⁴¹ Marcus, *Blood and Belief*, 244.

²⁴² Abdullah Öcalan, *Prison Writings III: The Road Map to Negotiations* (Cologne: International Initiative Edition, 2012), 79; Cengiz Gunes, *The Kurdish National Movement: From Protest to Resistance* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 127.

²⁴³ Öcalan, *Prison Writings III*, 20, 46, 57, 68, 73, 81, 85, 97.

²⁴⁴ Quoted in *Ibid.*, 57-58.

As evidenced by rhetoric in Western newspapers, the PKK succeeded in raising the importance of the “Kurdish Question” both on the international stage and within Turkey. Despite its use of violence, the media coverage on the denial of Kurdish rights provoked an international discussion on minorities within Turkey that transcended Öcalan and the PKK. In a 1998 editorial in the *Christian Science Monitor*, Mustafa Malik highlighted the similarities of Öcalan’s quest for Kurdish statehood to Yasser Arafat’s pursuit of a separate state of Palestine. Malik states,

Whatever Öcalan’s fate, his odyssey is likely to help put the Kurdish question on the global political agenda where it belongs. The Kurds are the world’s largest nation without a state of their own. Their historic homeland was split among five countries by victors of World War I.²⁴⁵

In contrast to the opening of dialogue on the legitimacy of Kurdish issues, the Minister of State for Human Rights Hikmet Sami Türk asserted on November 28, 1998 that recognition of Kurdish cultural rights was “totally unacceptable” because it would further their goal of “independence.”²⁴⁶ As the domestic community began moderating and differentiating Kurdish political rights from PKK violence, Turkish policymakers still perceived any concessions to the Kurdish community as contributing to their historic separatist goals of statehood.

5. International Support

Rhetoric from Turkish leaders illustrates that during the PKK’s campaign, Turkish leaders reacted to international support for the PKK through the lens of late Ottoman and early Republican interpretations of Kurdish nationalism and separatism. As outlined in Chapter II, the Sheik Said rebellion was believed to be fermented by British forces and multiple contemporary Turkish leaders have made connections between Sheik Said and Öcalan’s campaign.²⁴⁷ One author categorizes the issue of Kurdish nationalism in the twenty-first century as a “security issue with strong international links.”²⁴⁸ The

²⁴⁵ Mustafa Malik, “It’s the Kurds’ turn for world recognition,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, December 9, 1998.

²⁴⁶ As referenced in Malik, “It’s the Kurds’ turn for world recognition.”

²⁴⁷ Taşpınar, *Kurdish Nationalism and Political Islam in Turkey*, 166.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 165.

international element embodies two important aspects of the Sèvres Syndrome: anxieties of territorial dismemberment and fear of Western incursion. The Turkish state uses these associations as confirmation that the West is using the Kurds as the internal collaborators to achieve the Sèvres goals of Turkish territorial dismemberment.²⁴⁹

First, there is a perception in Turkey that PKK activities abroad constitute Western support and are part of an international proxy war against Turkey. Instead, it is more likely that the liberal political and cultural environment of Western Europe provided the PKK a refuge for militants, funding from prosperous members of the diaspora, and a base for propaganda promoting the “benign” Kurdish cause. These efforts affirmed Kurds as a separate ethnic group with a unique history and language by Western powers, which contributed to Turkish shifts toward recognition of Kurds political and cultural rights.²⁵⁰ In Germany, the PKK was designated as a terrorist organization and banned in 1993. After a period of relative calm, however, the PKK’s designation changed to a criminal organization which did not give Turkey the same protections against terrorist financing and organization.²⁵¹ PKK operations within the liberal environments in Europe aggravated the Sèvres Syndrome and led Turkish leaders to believe that any European recommendation to solve the “Kurdish Question” was not about cultural rights, but instead a conspiracy to dismember Turkey from within.

Like its support of ASALA, Syria also provided robust support to the PKK as a hotbed for training camps and a safe haven for the leadership. PKK fighters operated within Syria and Syria-controlled Lebanon during the 1980s, and the PLO provided training support. By 1994, Öcalan claimed that 15,000 guerrilla fighters were trained in Syrian camps. Additionally, Syria provided Öcalan protection from arrest for the majority of PKK activities. Shortly after the PKK’s formation, Öcalan fled Turkey and mainly remained in Syria from 1979 to his expulsion in October 1998 shortly before his arrest. The motivation for Syrian support was based on using the PKK as an instrument to assert

²⁴⁹ Göçek, *The Transformation of Turkey*, 155.

²⁵⁰ Mango, *Turkey and the War on Terror*, 35; Taşpınar, *Kurdish Nationalism and Political Islam in Turkey*, 5.

²⁵¹ Mango, *Turkey and the War on Terror*, 7-8.

territorial claims on Turkey's Hatay province.²⁵² Similar to ASALA, Syria supported the PKK as a foreign relations tool due to conflicts regarding Hatay and the Euphrates River. One scholar argues that "Syrian support for the PKK was a means of extortion in the conflict about the waters of the Euphrates rather than an attempt to destroy the territorial integrity of the Turkish state."²⁵³ Although Syria perceived the PKK as a tool for foreign relations purposes, Turkey viewed Syrian support for the PKK through the lens of the Sèvres Syndrome.

The Kurdish population in Iraq provided an important dimension for Turkish perceptions of Kurdish separatism. During the Iran-Iraq War, Turkey was a sanctuary for Kurds facing extermination from the Baathist regime. After the 1990—1991 Gulf War, Turkey aided American and British forces in creating and enforcing a no-fly zone over northern Iraq to provide Iraqi Kurds humanitarian protection from Saddam Hussein's regime. The PKK benefitted from two developments: first, Operation Provide Comfort/Operation Northern Watch created a safe haven for Iraqi Kurds; second, fighting between the two main Iraqi Kurdish leaders provided a steady flow of munitions and the PKK was able to operate freely in this newfound sanctuary.²⁵⁴ Unlike other states that supported the PKK, Turkey has been willing to take the offensive to engage in cross-border attacks on PKK forces in Iraq. Under a 1984 agreement, both Turkey and Iraq are permitted to pursue Kurdish guerrillas six miles into the other state's territory. Since 1984, Turkey intervened militarily into northern Iraq over fifty times under auspices of combating PKK militants and training camps.²⁵⁵

In particular, Turkey's relations with Iraq are greatly influenced by the Sèvres Syndrome. The Kurds in Iraq enjoy a de facto autonomous state in northern Iraq complete with developed institutions and infrastructure since the 1970 agreement that

²⁵² Mango, *Turkey and the War on Terror*, 34-36.

²⁵³ Jung, "The Sèvres Syndrome," 12.

²⁵⁴ White, *Primitive Rebels or Revolutionary Modernizers?*, 165.

²⁵⁵ Cohen, "Turkey's Kurdish campaign heats up"; Taşpınar, *Kurdish Nationalism and Political Islam in Turkey*, 173.

recognized Kurds as one of ~~two~~ nations of Iraq.”²⁵⁶ Turkey fears that chaos within Iraq could lead to a partition, with the already developed Kurdish state achieving statehood. Additionally, the Kurdish region of Iraq serves as a model for the Kurdish separatists. As will be further discussed in Chapter IV, it was due to these perceptions that the Turkish government viewed the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq as another American ploy to strengthen Kurdish separatist forces in Iraq and also feared that American intervention could hasten the dissolution of Iraq.²⁵⁷ To balance Iraqi Kurdish movement toward autonomy, Turkey has made multiple statements throughout the past decades affirming its commitment to Iraq’s territorial integrity and sovereignty. In 1995, the Turkish Ambassador to the United States declared that ~~No~~ country in the region and in the world is more sensitive than Turkey about the preservation of Iraq’s territorial integrity.”²⁵⁸ Turkey’s affirmation of Iraqi sovereignty has continued after the American invasion and Iraq through today, with the MFA publishing on their website that ~~Turkey~~ strong supports Iraq’s sovereignty, stability, political unity and territorial integrity.”²⁵⁹

The overview of foreign patronage for the PKK gives the impression that support stems more from foreign states’ willingness to capitalize on Turkey’s unresolved internal issues than principled sponsorship of Kurdish cultural and territorial goals. In many situations, it can be argued that the tense relations between Turkey and its neighbors stimulated support for the PKK based on the premise of *düşmanımın düşmanı dostumdur*—“my enemy’s enemy is my friend.” In turn, Turkey’s reaction to domestic terrorism dictated foreign policy during the 1980s and 1990s. The lasting effects of these relations will be further explored in Chapter IV.

²⁵⁶ Quoted in Nissim Rejwan, ~~What~~ “What the Kurds Want,” *Jerusalem Post*, April 14, 1991.

²⁵⁷ Carol Migdalovitz, *Iraq: Turkey, the Deployment of U.S. Forces, and Related Issues* (CRS Report No. RL31794) (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, May 2, 2003) <http://congressionalresearch.com/RL31794/document.php>.

²⁵⁸ Nuzhet Kandemir, letter to the editor, “Turkey Moved on Iraq to Combat Terrorism,” *New York Times*, March 30, 1995.

²⁵⁹ Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ~~Relations~~ “Relations between Turkey and Iraq,” August 22, 2014, <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/relations-between-turkey-and-iraq.en.mfa>.

D. CONCLUSION

An overview of ASALA and PKK terrorism illustrates that Turkey remains connected to its Ottoman past. Turkish leaders cling tightly to the late Ottoman and early Republican interpretations of separatism and foreign influence originated at Sèvres, keeping alive the destructive cycles of Ottoman separatism and irredentism that should have died at Lausanne. These interpretations of nationalist dissent remain relevant throughout the 1970s and 1980s. As evidenced by the rhetoric of both Turkish policymakers and the public, the goals, motivations, activities, and foreign support of both ASALA and the PKK have inflamed the Sèvres Syndrome within Turkey. Since Armenian and Kurdish issues were integral components of Sèvres, association with the treaty explains the propensity of the Turkish authorities to make unfounded connections between Ottoman and early Republican separatism and ASALA and PKK terrorism.

This chapter illustrates that the Turkish desire for absolute protection of territory comes at the expense of minority rights. Instead of viewing ASALA and the PKK in the context of nationalism and cultural rights, the state instinctively frames these groups as existential threats to the state. Although the Armenians were a protected group within Turkey, ASALA's demand for recognition of the genocide strikes at the heart of Turkish anxieties due to the tense relations during World War I. Turkey's single-mindedness on territorial integrity further aggrieved Turkey's Kurdish population. Instead of allowing moderate political and cultural rights, most Turkish leaders and government authorities interpreted coexistence as infringing on state unity and the first step toward territorial loss. The denial of political and cultural rights instigated the creation of the PKK and cultivated widespread support from the wider Kurdish community. During this period, the Sèvres Syndrome labeled the entire minority group "domestic enemies" even though they only represented a fraction of the population. This mindset allows the terrorist group to hijack the discussion, robbing both the state and the vast majority of moderates the ability to respond accurately to nationalist dissent.

In addition, the Sèvres Syndrome has influenced Turkish foreign relations and prevented the normalization of relations with neighboring states. Despite ASALA's dissolution and PKK's military defeat, the belief that both groups were sustained by

outside influence allows Turkish policymakers and the public to deduce that Sèvres was not dead, but merely dormant. In both cases, foreign states did not provide active or passive support to the groups since they agreed with the goals or *modus operandi*. Instead, there is evidence that states used this support as a way to underhandedly assert their foreign policy. This lingering legacy from Sèvres prevents Turkey from developing sound relations with neighbors including Iraq, Armenia, Syria, and a host of European and Western states.

During this period, policymaker reactions to ASALA and PKK terrorism were based in the Sèvres Syndrome and resulted in ineffective counterterrorism responses. Öcalan's capture in 1999 came just prior to the 2001 terrorist attacks that resulted in the influx of international support against terrorism. As seen in the next chapter, the trajectory of the Turkish counterterrorism response in the twenty-first century remains within the context of the Sèvres Syndrome and essentially unchanged from the late Ottoman and early Republican views of dissent evidenced in the 1970s and 1980s.

IV. NEW TERRORISM IN TURKEY

A. INTRODUCTION

At the turn of the twenty-first century, combating terrorism assumed new significance within global politics. Scholars described the rise of a “new terrorism” with groups that exhibited novel goals, methods, and organization from earlier terrorist attacks and groups. Primarily, “new terrorism” was identified by its religious justifications for political violence while “old terrorism” focused on the national liberation and territorial goals.²⁶⁰ Within this typology, ASALA and PKK terrorism in Turkey could be categorized as old terrorism. In the last fifteen years, however, Turkey has witnessed a decline in attacks from domestic terrorism and a rise in religiously-motivated terrorist attacks. Instead of instigating “new” terrorism within Turkey, the drawdown of violence after the PKK ceasefire spurred two trends. First, the defeat and weakening of older groups allowed for greater visibility for previously marginalized terrorist groups to wage attacks within Turkey. Second, the end of the military counterterrorism policies against the PKK provided the Turkish government an opening to vigorously pursue terrorist groups that were previously viewed as less significant. This was not an entirely new shift: during the 1990s, the Turkish military and police launched over 2,500 operations against Islamic terrorists and over 4,000 suspects were arrested and brought to trial.²⁶¹ Attacks from international terror networks suggest a worrisome trend, but developments must be evaluated through the historical contextualization of Turkish leaders’ perceptions.

Rhetoric and reactions from Turkish policymakers suggest that “new” terrorism is not perceived as the most significant threat to Turkey. Instead, Turkish policymakers and news media continue to identify separatist and nationalist groups as the foremost national

²⁶⁰ As differentiated in Martha Crenshaw, “The Debate Over ‘Old’ vs ‘New’ Terrorism,” in *Jihadi Terrorism and the Radicalisation Challenge: European and American Experiences*, Second Edition, ed. Rik Coolsaet (New York: Ashgate, 2011), 57-58.

²⁶¹ John T. Nugent, “The Defeat of Turkish Hizballah as a Model for Counter-Terrorism Strategy,” *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 8, no. 1 (March 2004).

security concern and make connections to the late Ottoman and early Republican periods. Threat perceptions are elevated only when links are made between religiously-motivated terrorism and separatist groups in terms of the global war on terror. Therefore, many links can be made between Turkey's counterterrorism strategy in the twenty-first century and the historical apprehensions crystallized in the Treaty of Sèvres. This chapter builds on the psychological impacts of the twentieth century and illustrates how these residual fears continue to have enormous impact on the way Turkey frames and responds to both separatist and religious terrorism.

First, the chapter will outline the trajectory of post-1999 PKK terrorism, government counterterrorism strategies, and illustrate how this threat continues to be framed by the Sèvres Syndrome. Next, the chapter will address the contemporary terrorist groups still active in Turkey, including the increased prominence of religiously-motivated groups, and the perception of these groups from Turkish policymakers and media. Although active within Turkey, these groups are viewed on the historical continuum of threats to Turkey's territorial integrity when connected to the PKK or separatist terrorism. Last, the chapter will focus on Turkey's perceptions of the global war on terror and illustrate how the perceived lack of American support against separatist terrorism inflames the Sèvres Syndrome.

B. POST-1999 PERCEPTIONS OF SEPARATIST TERRORISM

The tenor of Kurdish terrorism changed in the 1990s due to a combination of strong military repression and the capture of its powerful leader Abdullah Öcalan in 1999. After his capture, Öcalan announced a ceasefire and decreed that the 2,000 PKK militants within Turkey retreat to Iraq and the senior PKK members turn themselves in for arrest and imprisonment. It is important to note that despite the ceasefire, Öcalan adeptly retained his relevance and value by not ordering the PKK to disband or disarm.²⁶² The PKK emerged from this period and began to seek its goals through diplomatic means

²⁶² Marcus, *Blood and Belief*, 286-87.

and fight for a democratic Turkey that would unify Turks and Kurds as equals.²⁶³ Following Öcalan's capture, the PKK underwent multiple name changes: in 2002 it adopted Congress for Freedom and Democracy in Kurdistan (KADEK), in 2004 renewed as Congress of Kurdistan Public (KONGRA-GEL), and in 2005, Kurdish militant and nationalist groups united under the umbrella movement Kurdistan Communities Union (KCK). Despite the new names and pledges for a political solution, the strategy, activities, and militants remained largely the same and Turkish officials remain convinced that separatism is still the group's ultimate goal.²⁶⁴

The PKK's reforms initially appeared to have a beneficial effect on the level of violence. PKK attacks were virtually nonexistent between 1999 and the PKK declaring an end to the ceasefire in 2003.²⁶⁵ Despite the disarray among the rank and file of the PKK, the Kurdish People's Democracy Party (HADEP) was made up of Kurdish sympathizers and the group won the majority of the elections in southeastern Turkey in the early 2000s and kept the PKK pertinent during this period. During this period, Kurdish-language media transformed Öcalan's imprisonment into a symbol of Kurdish repression. These developments occurred during a period where Ankara claimed victory over the PKK due to the ceasefire and decreased violence, but only made limited concessions for Kurdish political and cultural rights. For example, a law permitting Kurdish-language broadcasting was passed in 2002, but the requisite regulatory laws to allow the broadcasting through the state-run station was postponed for another two years. Ultimately, the PKK returned to violence in June 2004 when Öcalan called an end to the ceasefire. The return to violence is attributed to claims that the Turkish state was

²⁶³ For more information, see Abdullah Öcalan, *Democratic Confederalism* (London: Transmedia Publishing, 2011).

²⁶⁴ Despite the name change, this thesis will continue to refer to Kurdish militant attacks as the PKK. Ünal, *Counterterrorism in Turkey*, 8; Migdalovitz. *Iraq: Turkey, the Deployment of U.S. Forces, and Related Issues*, 9-10.

²⁶⁵ According to statistics in the Global Terrorism Database, there were ten PKK attacks in Turkey between August 1999 and May 2004. Global Terrorism Database (object name PKK, accessed August 15, 2014). National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), 2013. <http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd>.

irresponsive to its peace initiatives, protests of Öcalan's treatment in prison, and the desire to assert the PKK's relevance.²⁶⁶

Devoid of political discourse, PKK violence swung from shaky truces to erratic terrorist attacks on civilians and raids on government assets. The Turkish government resurrected past failed deterrent policies of repression with air strikes on PKK strongholds in northern Iraq and a ground offensive in February 2008. By 2009, the Justice and Development Party (AKP) initiated the Democratic Opening and sought to win Kurdish public opinion by launching a state-run twenty-four-hour Kurdish language television station. Concurrently, members of the Turkish National Intelligence Organization (MIT) and PKK representatives initiated peace talks in a serious effort to resolve the conflict through peaceful means. Despite promises from the AKP platform in the 2011 parliamentary elections and the election of a record number of Kurdish parliamentarians, this détente deteriorated as brief episodes of violence from both sides that hardened both Turkish and Kurdish public opinions.²⁶⁷

A significant turning point was in October 2011 when the PKK killed twenty-four Turkish soldiers in a massive attack. Turkey launched a massive offensive in southeastern Turkey and northern Iraq with 10,000 troops and air support.²⁶⁸ Attacks continued to escalate and in 2012, Kurdish prisoners, activists, and politicians alike underwent a hunger strike that only ended after a personal appeal from Öcalan.²⁶⁹ In 2013, another round of talks between Öcalan and MIT concluded when Öcalan announced a ceasefire and ordered PKK militants to withdraw from Turkey. Despite the initial jubilant news within Turkey and the international community, the PKK announced it had stopped withdrawing militants from Turkey due to claims that Turkish government reforms

²⁶⁶ Marcus, *Blood and Belief*, 291-5; Migdalovitz. *Iraq: Turkey, the Deployment of U.S. Forces, and Related Issues*, 9-10.

²⁶⁷ "Turkey: Ending the PKK Insurgency," *International Crisis Group*, Europe Report No. 213, September 20, 2011.

²⁶⁸ Sebnem Arsu, "Turkey Deploys Thousands in Pursuit of Kurdish Rebels," *New York Times*, October 20, 2011.

²⁶⁹ Jenna Krajeski, "After the Hunger Strike," *New Yorker*, November 27, 2012.

promised in the ceasefire agreement were not implemented.²⁷⁰ Turkish policymakers perceive the struggle against the PKK to be Turkey's main domestic problem. In 2009, President Gül stated, "Whether you call it a terror problem, a south-eastern Anatolia problem or a Kurdish problem, this is the first question for Turkey. It has to be solved."²⁷¹

1. Responses to Terrorism

The nature of Turkish counterterrorism strategy was greatly influenced by the nationalist and territorial anxieties informed from future experiences with separatism and minority groups. Instead of defaulting to political or diplomatic instruments for counterterrorism, the historic perception of terrorism logically engaged the Turkish military as the primary state apparatus used to combat the PKK. Between World War II and its participation in International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) missions in Afghanistan, the Turkish military was solely focused on Kurdish militants other than brief engagements in the Korean War and the 1974 invasion of Cyprus. In Turkey's case, domestic terrorism likely curtailed the state's ability to initiate democratic reforms because policymakers' sole focus was national defense against a seemingly existential threat.²⁷² As illustrated in Chapter III, the military utilized deterrent policies such as incapacitation, military force, and anti-terrorism laws. Ironically, terrorism peaked in the 1990s, but it was the military that ultimately triumphed to defeat, but not eliminate, PKK terrorism.²⁷³ Based on quantitative evidence, these state policies did not result in a sustainable deterrent on PKK violence. Instead, a weakened PKK pragmatically adapted to the new operational realities and pursued a strategy of selective and limited violence. While the deterrent policies allowed the Turkish state to claim victory by preventing

²⁷⁰ "Terrorist PKK halts withdrawal from Turkey, maintains cease-fire," *Today's Zaman*, September 9, 2013.

²⁷¹ President Abdullah Gül, *Yeni Şafak*, May 9, 2009 quoted in "Turkey: Ending the PKK Insurgency," *International Crisis Group*, Europe Report No. 213, September 20, 2011.

²⁷² McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds*, 198; Mango, *Turkey and the War on Terror*, 74, 85.

²⁷³ Terrorism expert Martha Crenshaw makes a distinction between the decline and end of terrorism. The former does not necessarily precipitate the latter. See research in Martha Crenshaw, ed. *Terrorism in Context* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995).

Kurdish secession and statehood, these same policies did not put a stop to the violence.²⁷⁴ As with previous military operations, these policies prove ineffective toward fostering lasting peace in Turkey and continue to perpetrate the cycle of military operations followed by short-lived ceasefires. In response to the 2011 military operations, analyst Hugh Pope stated, “We have been down this road many times before...Politicians might say they can hit the P.K.K. out of the park this time, but it never has worked and it never can work.”²⁷⁵ As will be illustrated in the next section, Turkish policymakers’ perceptions of contemporary terrorism dictated the counterterrorism policy.

Outside of the military option, Turkey has pursued anti-defiance counterterrorism policies with varying degrees of commitment and success. Only upon witnessing a weakened PKK was Turkey able to realize that PKK could not be fought through military means alone. The 2003 election of the AKP and Prime Minister Erdoğan provided an opening for Kurdish rights independent of PKK hegemony over the issue. Erdoğan’s government built on President Turgut Özal’s 1992 approach that sought to combat the PKK through improving socioeconomic conditions in southeastern Turkey and expanding Kurdish rights. These linguistic and cultural policies include allowance of Kurdish languages, abolition of the anti-Kurdish laws, and recognition of Nevruz. In his 2005 speech in Diyarbakır, Erdoğan promoted cultural pluralism under the umbrella of Turkish unity, admitted previous mistakes on Kurdish issues, and promised to implement measures bolstering Kurdish rights.²⁷⁶ These measures sought to address the Kurdish population’s legitimate grievances rather than indiscriminate anti-defiance policies. While these measures have reduced violence in the short-run and improved political opinion in the Kurdish community, there is no quantitative evidence that the anti-defiance policies had a deterrent effect on PKK violence.²⁷⁷

²⁷⁴ Ünal, *Counterterrorism in Turkey*, 144-48.

²⁷⁵ Quoted in Liam Stack and Sebnem Arsu, “Clashes with Kurds Are Pushing Turkey Back Towards Conflict,” *New York Times*, October 24, 2011.

²⁷⁶ Inan Ozyildiz, “Turkey’s Vision of Combating Terrorism,” in *Combating International Terrorism: Turkey’s Added Value*, eds. James Ker-Lindsay and Alastair Cameron, RUSI Occasional Paper (October 2009): 3.

²⁷⁷ Ünal, *Counterterrorism in Turkey*, 146-47, 164.

Despite the Kurdish opening, both rhetoric and policy illustrates that the Turkish military establishment has not embraced the shift in counterterrorism strategy. After Öcalan's capture, the General Chief of Staff issued a declaration admonishing supporters of Kurdish cultural rights as "[speaking] the same tongue as the PKK."²⁷⁸ The past decade was categorized by contradictory policies: at times, AKP sends positive signals by engaging in Kurdish cultural reforms; during others, the government unleashes the military against the PKK and takes steps to subdue peaceful expressions of Kurdish nationalism.²⁷⁹ Turkish military leaders continue to take a hard line against the PKK with general beliefs categorized by statements similar to General İlker Başbuğ: military operations will be ongoing until "the last terrorist is neutralized."²⁸⁰ Opponents still exist who maintain that these rights will lead to the dismemberment of Turkey. In a 2007 interview, former Chief of General Staff Gen. Güreş communicated his beliefs that Kurdish rights are institutionalized, but they will have a negative effect on the unitary nature of the state and the preservation of Turkish identity.²⁸¹ In another example, General Evren admitted in 2007 that the ban on Kurdish languages in the 1982 constitution was a "mistake," but retained his belief Turkish must remain the official language.²⁸² These interviews illustrate that top military leadership recognizes that anti-defiance policies and cultural allowances are the best strategy, but entrenched territorial anxieties prevent full adoption of these measures.

Many factors outside of the range of counterterrorism policies and Kurdish nationalism hinder the elimination of PKK terrorism. Southeastern Turkey is plagued with endemic underdevelopment, mountainous territory that complicates trade and access, and neighboring states with unstable governments and rampant civil wars. While

²⁷⁸ Quoted in Göçek, *The Transformation of Turkey*, 174.

²⁷⁹ "Turkey: The PKK and a Kurdish Settlement," *International Crisis Group*, Europe Report No. 219, September 11, 2012.

²⁸⁰ Quoted in Ertan Efeğil, "Analysis of the AKP Government's Policy Toward the Kurdish Issue," *Turkish Studies* 12, no. 1 (May 25, 2011): 34.

²⁸¹ Interview with former Chief of General Staff Gen. Güreş. Fikra Bila, "US, EU seek to divide Turkey," *Hürriyet Daily News*, November 13, 2007.

²⁸² Interview with former Chief of General Staff and seventh President Kenan Evren. Fikra Bila, "We banned Kurdish, but it was a mistake," *Hürriyet Daily News*, November 16, 2007.

these conditions may have fostered and facilitated the emergence of Kurdish terrorism, they do not explain or justify terrorism.²⁸³ Instead, PKK terrorism has likely contributed to the economic crisis in the southeast by driving away tourism and investment opportunities. Öcalan accepts these realities and recently stated that from an economic perspective, Kurds cannot viable establish their own state and their survival is linked to the Turkish economy.²⁸⁴

2. Counterterrorism Strategies through the Lens of Sèvres

Overall, Turkish counterterrorism policy could generally be considered a success. Although these policies have failed to end PKK violence, Turkish counterterrorism policies have militarily defeated the PKK, forced the group to limit its goals, shifted its strategy of violence, and changed its ideology. All of these concessions were achieved without Turkey's greatest fear coming to fruition: since the onset of PKK violence, Turkey never lost control over any of the territory granted in the Treaty of Lausanne.²⁸⁵ While cultural and political rights could function similarly to Cypriots, Greeks, and Armenians within Turkey, it has proven politically difficult for AKP policymakers to harmonize increasing public support for Kurdish nationalism without the perception that it is endangering Turkish sovereignty. Although the post-1999 PKK seeks Kurdish political and cultural rights, the peace process has been overshadowed by the Turkish preoccupation of protecting the territorial integrity of the state. These biases are especially challenging to overcome since decades of war and mixed messages have institutionalized the conviction that Turkish Kurds seek an independent state.²⁸⁶ It is easy for critics to call for a political issue to the "Kurdish problem," but there no viable road map or solution has been proposed that deals with the deep-rooted problems while not compounding past grievances.²⁸⁷

²⁸³ Mango, *Turkey and the War on Terror*, 57, 85.

²⁸⁴ Criss, "The Nature of PKK terrorism in Turkey," 28.

²⁸⁵ Ünal, *Counterterrorism in Turkey*, 164.

²⁸⁶ "Turkey: The PKK and a Kurdish Settlement," Europe Report No. 219, *International Crisis Group*, September 11, 2012; Taşpınar, *Kurdish Nationalism and Political Islam in Turkey*, 111.

²⁸⁷ Criss, "The Nature of PKK terrorism in Turkey," 34; Ünal, *Counterterrorism in Turkey*, 155-58.

Although it seems counterintuitive for Turkey to continue to use military force as a counterterrorism strategy after it achieved more success with anti-defiance strategies, the reason is rooted on the same historical continuum. Since Turkey viewed the PKK as a continuation of the Kurdish separatist revolts in the early Republican period, the Turkish military initially responded to PKK violence through similar means. The military is the primary state instrument for national security and protection of territorial integrity and decades of military-centric counterterrorism policies have further ingrained the Sèvres Syndrome. The survey of literature in Chapter I illustrates that few in the academic community make direct connections between the Treaty of Sèvres—which is extensively documented—and the Turkish reactions to PKK terrorism. The anxieties born at Sèvres are still present in discussions on counterterrorism. Contemporary Turkish leaders and news editorials make references to the symptoms of the Sèvres Syndrome even if the treaty is not explicitly mentioned.

First, the Sèvres Syndrome's fear of territorial dismemberment and domestic separatism is evident in reactions by contemporary Turkish politicians and news outlets pertaining to counterterrorism. Pointedly, then-President Demirel stated that the West is ~~try~~ing to involve the Sèvres Treaty to set up a Kurdish state in the region.”²⁸⁸ In 2007, retired General Aytaç Yalman viewed the PKK's existence as part of a three step process: suppression, militarization, and politicization. If the PKK's struggle is able to escalate to the politicization stage, this would be ~~most~~ dangerous of all” to ~~Turkey's~~ unity and territorial integrity.”²⁸⁹ He did acknowledge that this could only be achieved if full rights for Kurdish identity were permitted and not viewed as ~~destructive~~—seemingly impossible in a nationalist society where Turks are conditioned in ~~reflexive~~ patriotism” through the education system and the media.²⁹⁰ Some scholars even contend that the PKK has not truly embraced this change of strategy; instead, it is utilizing selective

²⁸⁸ Quoted in Göçek, *The Transformation of Turkey*, 154.

²⁸⁹ Quoted in Gareth Jenkins, ~~Former~~ Turkish Commanders Discuss Costs and Benefits of Cross-Border Operation Against PKK,” *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 4, no. 207 (November 7, 2007): 1.

²⁹⁰ Didem Akyel Collinsworth, ~~Turkey~~ wins new space for Kurdishness,” *International Crisis Group*, December 6, 2013.

violence complemented with political strategies to first achieve political compromises and then seek autonomy, confederation, and ultimately Kurdish statehood.²⁹¹

Second, the belief that the PKK is a source of Western intervention is also present in contemporary reactions. Top policymakers have expressed that the West's promotion of a political solution with the Kurds is a foreign-inspired plot. Prime Minister Ecevit stated that a Kurdish problem does not exist within Turkey, but PKK terrorism is supported by foreign states seeking to divide Turkey.²⁹² After the 2001 terrorist attacks in New York and Washington, DC, U.S. activities in the Middle East increased and Turkey became an important transit hub for operations in Iraq. In its desire to keep Iraq stable for military actions, the United States pledged to defend Turkey against the PKK. In 2007, President Bush declared that PKK was an "enemy to the U.S." and followed through with his pledge to provide "actionable intelligence" to Turkey.²⁹³ Despite the PKK's stated change in goals and the U.S. commitment to supporting Turkey's efforts against the PKK, rhetoric from the Turkish military community still demonstrates the pervasiveness of the Sèvres Syndrome. In a 2007 interview, former Chief of General Staff Gen. Güreş expressed a disbelief in the authenticity in both. His claim that "we see maps depicting a divided Turkey" illustrates his perception that the PKK was still threatening Turkish territorial integrity and the United States was a key player in the conspiracy to create a Kurdish state.²⁹⁴ Instead of focusing on the U.S. counterterrorism policies that supported Turkey against the PKK, military leaders choose to believe that Western states continue to support Kurdish intentions to dismember Turkey. For example, Gen. Güreş stated: "What are [the U.S.] goals? For Turkey to become smaller. My fear is that one day someone will say 'It's too much of a headache. Let's get rid of it.'"²⁹⁵

²⁹¹ Ünal, *Counterterrorism in Turkey*, 163.

²⁹² Dietrich Jung and Wolfango Piccoli, *Turkey At the Crossroads: Ottoman Legacies and a Greater Middle East* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 117.

²⁹³ Quoted in Karen Kaya, "Different War on Terrorism: The U.S., Turkey, and the PKK," *Small Wars Journal*, May 2, 2012.

²⁹⁴ Interview with former Chief of General Staff Gen. Güreş. Fikra Bila, "We banned Kurdish, but it was a mistake, 'US, EU seek to divide Turkey,'" *Hürriyet Daily News*, November 13, 2007.

²⁹⁵ Quoted in Gareth Jenkins, "Former Turkish Commanders Discuss Costs and Benefits of Cross-Border Operation Against PKK," *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 4, no. 207 (November 7, 2007): 2.

Over a decade into the twenty-first century, many in Turkey and the region view the inability to overcome these symptoms of the Sèvres Syndrome as the root of the problems with the PKK. While in Turkey as a guest of President Gül in 2010, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad stated, “The PKK is not today’s problem. You can follow it back all the way to Sèvres.” He claimed that Turkey needed to provide assurances to Kurds that they could live in Turkey as equals while expressing their ethnicity, but also uphold the citizenship requirements of a united country.²⁹⁶ The Sèvres Syndrome is also frequently the topic of articles in Turkish media. In a recent article discussing then-Prime Minister Erdoğan’s August 2014 presidency bid, the author speculated the effect of Erdoğan’s Kurdish opening on the Turkish public. Despite his good intentions, the scope of Erdoğan’s Kurdish opening will be bounded by the fact that “almost everyone on these lands agonizingly remembers the fate of the Ottoman Empire, which disintegrated and eventually collapsed because all of its autonomous regions declared their independence.”²⁹⁷ The inability to overcome the anxiety of disintegration and collapse from the end of the Ottoman Empire continues to dictate Turkish counterterrorism policy toward the PKK and the Kurds.

C. RELIGIOUSLY-MOTIVATED TERRORISM IN TURKEY

Less pervasive and ubiquitous than the PKK attacks, terrorist groups that point to religion as their motivating factor have historically existed within Turkey and are still active today. Terrorism in Turkey is synonymous with the PKK, but the Turkish experience proves that “outmoded Marxist extremism, separatist nationalism and religious terrorism flourish in the same environment.”²⁹⁸ Radical Islamic ideology appeared in Turkey during the 1970s. After the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran, many Turkish Islamic scholars traveled to Iran and imported Salafist ideology upon their return. The 1981 military coup and subsequent transition to democracy opened Turkish borders to Islamic publications from throughout the region that were quickly translated into

²⁹⁶ “Syrian president discusses Turkish Kurds, Iraq, water issues,” *BBC Monitoring Middle East*, May 12, 2010.

²⁹⁷ Ihsan Yilmaz, “Erdoğan’s Dilemma: Turkists or Kurdists?” *Today’s Zaman*, June 12, 2014.

²⁹⁸ Mango, *Turkey and the War on Terror*, 60.

Turkish. The military's censorship and societal control kept the radical Islamic groups underground but they maintained their resilience. When al-Qaeda gained worldwide attention in the 1990s, there were already established networks of Salafist sympathizers within hotspots such as Gaziantep, Konya, and Istanbul.²⁹⁹ While Turkish society is frequently applauded for its natural "immunizations" against religious terrorism—the existence of another terror group for extremists to join, the role of the government with the Ministry of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet*), and integration and prominence of Islamic groups into the secular Turkish politics—the environment still exists for religion to be manipulated for political purposes.³⁰⁰

The three main groups operating within Turkey that claim religion, not nationalism or leftist ideology, as their motivation are the Kurdish Hizbollah, İBDA-C, and al-Qaeda in Turkey. DHKP/C has also committed multiple suicide attacks in the past decade, with a prominent attack on the U.S. Embassy in Ankara.³⁰¹ Since it espouses a Marxist-Leninist anti-American and anti-NATO ideology, it will not be included in this study. This section illustrates that Turkish perceptions of terrorism remain rooted in the anxieties born at Sèvres, with policymakers' rhetoric and reaction increasing when the groups are linked to nationalist terrorism. Connections between the PKK and "new" terrorism evoke fears of territorial dismemberment and Western intervention that skew Ankara's foreign relations within the region and on the international stage.

1. Kurdish Hizbollah

Hizbollah was active in Iran since the 1979 Revolution and first emerged in the Turkish Kurdish community in 1983. Kurdish Hizbollah operated and launched violent attacks with Turkey during the 1980s and 1990s, but appeared to decline after their leader, İrfan Çağırıcı, was imprisoned in 1996. There are no known ties between the Lebanese Hizbollah and Kurdish Hizbollah in Turkey because the Lebanese group is

²⁹⁹ Rusen Cakir, "The Reemergence of Hizbollah in Turkey," *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, Policy Focus #74 (September 2007).

³⁰⁰ Ercan Yavuz, "Professor Serhat Erkmen: Al-Qaeda not a threat to Turkey," *Today's Zaman*, January 31, 2010.

³⁰¹ "DHKP-C group claims US embassy suicide blast in Ankara," *BBC News*, February 2, 2013.

Shiite and the Turkish group is Sunni. Kurdish Hizbollah describes a loose arrangement of terrorist groups within Turkey—so loose that the terrorists themselves do not even identify under this name. Instead, the groups are held together by claims of religion as the motivation and justification for their political violence. The targets of this network have been other Islamic groups, the PKK, mercenary assassinations (mainly contracted through Iran), and prominent secular members of Turkish society. The most publicized attacks have been against journalists, academics, and artists through targeted killings, kidnappings, and arson. A key figure in Turkey was Hüseyin Velioğlu, an extremist wanted for attempting to overthrow the secular Turkish government and replace with an Islamic regime. He reportedly had traveled to Iran for political and military training from the Iranian Revolutionary Guards and was killed in Istanbul in 2000.³⁰² Police raids on Hizbollah in January 2000 raised public awareness on group activities, including the discovery of kidnapped victims buried alive and tortured to death.³⁰³

Kurdish Hizbollah was founded partly on the basis of opposing the PKK's message rather than purely religious goals. During the 1990s, Kurdish Hizbollah engaged in what could be categorized as a civil war against the PKK in southeastern Turkey. Although the Turkish government opposed both groups, its counterterrorism strategy sought to defeat the PKK before eliminating the Kurdish Hizbollah. In the words of the governor of Diyarbakır, the Turkish state did not support the group, ~~but~~ it may have look at Hizbollah sympathetically” and did not dedicate major resources to eliminating Hizbollah.³⁰⁴ After reports that Kurdish Hizbollah and the PKK signed a ceasefire and united to join forces against the state in 1993, the connection to the PKK spurred the state to genuinely combat religious terrorism. Between 1990—2002, over 4,000 Islamist militant suspects had been arrested and sent to trial.³⁰⁵ This trajectory illustrates that the change in the Turkish government's resolve was not prompted by the severity of the attacks, but instead in the quest to eliminate PKK through any means possible.

³⁰² Mango, *Turkey and the War on Terror*, 61-64.

³⁰³ “Islamic militants on trial in Turkey,” *BBC News*, July 10, 2000.

³⁰⁴ Quoted in Mango, *Turkey and the War on Terror*, 64.

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 61-65.

2. İBDA-C

İBDA-C was formed in the 1970s as an Islamic youth organization with the Sunni-Salafi ideology, opposing the secular Turkish government and rule of law. The group moved to violence in the 1990s and mainly conducts bombings of secular or non-Islamic targets such as places of worship and establishments selling alcohol.³⁰⁶ İBDA-C appeared to be on the decline after its leader, Sahil Erdiş (also known as Sahil Mirzabeyoğlu) was arrested in 1998. Conversely, the group adapted and adopted the strategy of “leaderless resistance” or “leaderless jihad.”³⁰⁷ The group now operates without central leadership or hierarchical authority and militants are encouraged to act on behalf of İBDA-C and select their own targets. Unlike the prolific nature of Kurdish Hizbollah terrorism, İBDA-C achieved a low level of effectiveness and success until 2003.³⁰⁸

On November 15 and November 20, 2003, four truck bombs detonated in Istanbul collectively killing fifty-eight people and injuring 750. Targets included two synagogues, the British Consulate (killing the counsel general), and a branch of the London-based HSBC Bank. Although the attacks targeted American and Israeli interests, many Turkish citizens were killed.³⁰⁹ The Islamic militant group İBDA-C originally took responsibility, but the investigation illustrated that the ringleaders and perpetrators had ties to al-Qaeda and Kurdish Hizbollah. The attacks were carried out by a group of Turks already radicalized and organized into a terrorist cell that was not in direct contact with al-Qaeda. These terrorists had a weak, most likely nominal, connection with al-Qaeda core.³¹⁰ These fighters instead shared a similar profile to many al-Qaeda fighters—particularly

³⁰⁶ Bulent Aras and Şule Toktaş, “Al-Qaeda, ‘War on Terror’ and Turkey,” *Third World Quarterly* 28, no. 5 (2007): 1045.

³⁰⁷ “Leaderless jihad” was coined by Marc Sageman as the proliferation of al Qaeda ideology as an inspiration for individuals to self-select, become radicalized, and commit violence without hierarchical guidance. See Marc Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad: Terror Networks in the Twenty-First Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008).

³⁰⁸ Mango, *Turkey and the War on Terror*, 67.

³⁰⁹ Smith, “Explosions in Istanbul Destroy British Consulate and Bank; At Least 27 Killed, 400 Injured.”

³¹⁰ “Bin Laden allegedly planned attack in Turkey,” *NBC News*, December 17, 2003.

their training at camps in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The group did not share all of al-Qaeda's grievances or goals, but they shared objections of oppression of Muslims and a willingness to strike American and Israeli targets. Gaining financial support and logistical assistance, preparations for this attack were reportedly approved directly by al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden a week before September 11, 2001 in what might have been his last personal authorization.³¹¹ The 2003 Istanbul bombings were the first clear evidence that al-Qaeda had a presence in Turkey with the perpetrators living and financing the attacks domestically.³¹² Up to this point, this was the most significant single terrorist attack on Turkish territory. Unlike reactions to PKK terrorism, the Turkish government increased police activity against the group and did not resort to military action.

3. Al-Qaeda

Unlike states in the broader Middle East and North Africa region, there is no separate "Turkish al-Qaeda" branch. Instead, al-Qaeda consistently utilizes established local radical Islamist organizations within Turkey to carry out attacks without any targeting assistance, funding, or direct leadership guidance from senior leadership. In Turkey, Kurdish Hizbollah appears to have a direct connection with foreign al-Qaeda militants, while the İBDA-C is aligned through ideology.³¹³ There is evidence that al-Qaeda also utilizes the Kurdish Hizbollah networks in Turkey to move people and funds from Europe to Syria, Iraq, and greater Middle East operations.³¹⁴ Consistent with other Islamic groups within Turkey, these aligned groups are largely decentralized and operate independently with the connection between al-Qaeda core and Turkish militants thought to be weak and most likely nominal. Although there is no official data due to clandestine travel, it is estimated that a very small number of Turkish citizens have traveled to Arab

³¹¹ "Bin Laden allegedly planned attack in Turkey," *NBC News*, December 17, 2003.

³¹² Karl Vick, "Al-Qaeda's Hand in Istanbul Plot," *Washington Post*, February 13, 2007.

³¹³ Hodgson, "The al Qaeda threat in Turkey"; Alakbar Raufoğlu, "Turkey police arrest 13 for suspected al-Qaeda ties," *SES Türkiye*, August, 30, 2012.

³¹⁴ Aras and Toktaş, "Al-Qaeda, 'War on Terror' and Turkey," 1044-46.

countries for training or to serve as foreign fighters. Consequently, no Turks are known to be in the top echelons of al-Qaeda.³¹⁵

Within Turkey, PKK and al-Qaeda share a symbiotic relationship in order to conduct attacks. First, al-Qaeda has attempted to exploit the violence and disorder created by the Kurdish conflict as a cover for their movement and to divert attention from its cells. Second, Kurds have also doubled as al-Qaeda fighters. The PKK has benefitted from the al-Qaeda presence by adopting similar tactics, but it is unclear whether al-Qaeda militants have mentored or taught radical Kurdish organizations. One example is the PKK's use of suicide bombings which could either be from direct training or observing al-Qaeda's previous successes with suicide bombings.³¹⁶

The government's experience with the PKK has led to strong counterterrorism measures against all forms of terrorism, including al-Qaeda.³¹⁷ Since al-Qaeda is a highly decentralized and largely indistinguishable network, the state utilizes law enforcement methods rather than deterrent military measures. The Turkish police has been largely successful in thwarting al-Qaeda attacks and carrying out large numbers of arrests of suspected al-Qaeda sympathizers and militants. Thwarted plots include an attack on İncirlik Base in 2003, the Istanbul NATO summit in 2004 attended by President Bush, and the U.S. Embassy in Ankara during Security of State Clinton's visit in 2011. Turkish police also conduct routine operations and mass arrests of al-Qaeda members and sympathizers. Throughout 2009 and 2012, the Turkish police conducted multiple raids across the country foiling multiple attacks in multiple stages of planning and arresting people suspected with al-Qaeda links.³¹⁸ The Turkish government has failed to adequately combat al-Qaeda terrorism that does not have a connection to separatism or foreign conspiracies to undermine Turkey's territorial integrity. Instead of combating al-

³¹⁵ Mango, *Turkey and the War on Terror*, 60.

³¹⁶ "Turkey: The Reappearance of al Qaeda," *Stratfor*, April 24, 2006.

³¹⁷ "Turkey police arrest 120 al-Qaeda suspects," *BBC*, January 22, 2010.

³¹⁸ For example, see Hodgson, "The al Qaeda threat in Turkey"; "Turkey: Police Detain Suspected Al Qaeda Supporters," *Stratfor*, July 9, 2010; "Turkey: Police Hold 17 for Al Qaeda Links," *Stratfor*, June 9, 2010; "Turkey: 30 Suspected Al Qaeda Members Arrested," *Stratfor*, April 9, 2009; Lee Ferran, "Turkey: Al Qaeda Planned Attack on U.S. Embassy," *ABC News*, July 13, 2011.

Qaeda terrorists with the same fervor as PKK terrorists within its borders, Erdoğan has pledged to “wage the same fight against all *separatist* terrorist groups if there were such groups [on Turkish soil].”³¹⁹ Al-Qaeda is not a separatist group and does not inflame the same historical anxieties that trigger massive counterterror responses.

4. Islamic State

As the threat from religiously-motivated terrorism continues to evolve and adapt, it is important to study the consistency and trajectory of Ankara’s perceptions of terrorism within and near its borders. At the time of publication, both the Syrian and Iraqi governments are unable to retain a monopoly over the use of force and exert sovereignty over their territory. Despite its former close relations with Syrian president Bashar al-Assad, Turkey broke off relations in 2011 and based its policy toward Syria on the downfall of the Assad regime.³²⁰ After the change in policy, Turkey provided the Syrian opposition and Jabhat al-Nusra access to Turkish territory as a safe haven for foreign fighters and opened its borders to smuggled weapons. There are allegations that Turkey supports al-Qaeda-linked groups that are “friendly” jihadists” and the ethnic Turkish Turkmen in Syrian since they oppose the Syrian regime.³²¹ Tensions increased conflict moved into military realm with a Turkish reconnaissance aircraft shot down by Syria in 2012, bringing the two countries dangerously close to war. In the deadliest terror attack on Turkish territory, two bombs exploded in Reyhanlı in May 2013 and killed fifty-three people. Turkey blamed this attack on proxies acting on behalf of Syrian intelligence.³²² Turkey only declared Jabhat al-Nusra a terrorist organization six months after the United States, holding out hope that the group would be the most effective tool to remove the Assad regime and defeat the Syrian army. Out of this disarray, the Islamic State—a Sunni

³¹⁹ “Turkey fights al-Qaeda like it fights the PKK: PM Erdoğan,” *Hürriyet Daily News*, November 7, 2013.

³²⁰ Semih Idiz, “Gul calls for reset of Turkey’s Syria policy,” *Al-Monitor*, January 15, 2014.

³²¹ Semih Idiz, “Turkey under pressure over jihadists on border,” *Al-Monitor*, January 24, 2014.

³²² Hugh Pope, “Turkey’s Tangled Syria Policy,” *CTC Sentinel* 6, no. 8 (August 2013): 4-8.

jihadi group with tenuous ties to al-Qaeda—gained influence and territory throughout the Levant region in a quest to establish the Caliphate.³²³

Since Assad has proven his staying power, Turkey has reversed its policy of open borders and maintains a complex relationship with the Islamic State. Violence plagues the region with multiple instances of Turkish civilians killed by stray shells in cities along the border since 2011. In addition, an onslaught of over a million Syrian refugees have flooded Turkey's border areas, costing the government over \$3 billion and straining the capabilities of the domestic humanitarian response infrastructure.³²⁴ Commentators assert that Turkey's negligent policies created the conditions that allowed the Islamic State to flourish in both Iraq and Syria without implementing serious counterterrorism policies to combat the group.³²⁵ Consistent with earlier manifestations of terrorism, Ankara's perceptions of the Islamic State have led to a skewed policy rooted more in historical territorial anxieties than the contemporary realities. For example, Erdoğan's campaign for president in August 2014 focused on the Gaza crisis, with critics arguing that the campaign steered clear of counterterrorism to avoid embarrassment from the failed Syrian policy. Turkey has not designated the Islamic State as a terrorist organization and instead refers to it as an "entity" with then-Foreign Minister Davutoğlu defining it as a "radical organization with a terrorist-like structure."³²⁶

During this period, Turkish reactions focused more on supporting any group that could stem the tide of Kurdish separatism rather than the national security threat developing at its border. There were persistent allegations and speculation throughout 2014 of Ankara's logistical support to terrorist groups operating within Syria. Turkey has been accused of supporting the Islamic State for two main reasons: as a tool to topple the

³²³ For the purposes of this thesis, the terrorist group encapsulated under the names Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS), Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), etc. will be referred to as the Islamic State.

³²⁴ Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Foreign Minister Davutoğlu, 'We Witness the Most Destructive Humanitarian Catastrophe of the Decade in Syria,'" <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/foreign-minister-davutoglu-we-witness-the-most-destructive-humanitarian-catastrophe-of-the-decade-in-syria.en.mfa>.

³²⁵ Semih Idiz, "Why is Jabhat al-Nusra no longer useful to Turkey," *Al-Monitor*, June 10, 2014.

³²⁶ Semih Idiz, "Turkey downplays IS threat, but concerns grow," *Al-Monitor*, August 8, 2014.

Assad regime and as a strategy to align the state with PKK-opposition groups. While seemingly separate goals, both aim to prevent autonomous Kurdish rule in Syria that would encourage Kurdish separatism within Turkey. President Assad's refusal to step down after Erdoğan's warning in 2011 publically demonstrated the limits of Turkey's influence in the Middle East and Erdoğan distanced himself from his former ally.³²⁷ The continuing Syrian civil war and the lack of a centralized government increases the chance that Kurds could gain autonomous control over Syrian territory. Turkey has also allegedly extended its support to the Islamic State as it threatened Kurdish regions of Iraq, but this strategy backfired as the PKK and the Iraqi Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) joined in a military alliance, strengthening the PKK.³²⁸ These trends illustrate that Turkish policymakers consistently view terrorism as part of the historical continuum of separatism and threats to the territorial integrity even as Turkey's main threat on the Iraqi borders shift from Kurds to Sunni extremists and the Turkish peace negotiations with the PKK continues to mature.

While developments in Syria directly threaten Turkey's national security with violence spilling over the border, the unfolding scenario in Iraq aggravates Turkey's Sèvres Syndrome. In June 2014, Islamic State militants gained control of Mosul—an episode referred to as the fall of Mosul in Turkey. Soon after, Islamic militants took 49 Turkish nationals hostage, including all of the diplomatic staff at the Turkish consulate in Mosul. By seizing control of the consulate that has no strategic leverage, the militants are asserting their control over the territory and could be using the hostages for political purposes.³²⁹ Mosul's fall to Islamic militants is significant due to the wider trajectory of militant activities, but Turkey's irredentist claims raise the gravity of these developments. Foreign Minister Davutoğlu's stance toward these Islamic groups has stiffened, stating "Nobody should test Turkey's resolve" and the Turkish government has threatened

³²⁷ Jonny Hogg and Tulay Karadeniz, "Assad's staying power leaves Turkey frustrated and exposed," *Reuters*, May 27, 2014.

³²⁸ Murat Yetkin, "Syrian crisis affects Turkey's Kurdish dialogue," *Hürriyet Daily News*, November 6, 2013.

³²⁹ Ceylan Yeginsu, "Militants Storm Turkish Consulate in Iraqi City, Taking 49 People as Hostages," *International New York Times*, June 11, 2014.

military force.³³⁰ Ironically, when Kirkuk was captured by Kurdish forces, it was welcomed as a seemingly positive alternative to falling under the control of Islamic forces. Only a few years prior, Kurdish control over Kirkuk would have been a redline for Turkey due to former Turkish claims over the territory and the strengthening of Iraqi Kurdistan.³³¹ The Islamic State also directly challenged Turkish sovereignty and territorial integrity when it threatened to destroy the tomb of Şüleyman Shah, the grandfather of the Ottoman Empire's founder Sultan Osman. Turkey retains claims over this territory based on the 1921 Treaty of Ankara, and Turkish soldiers and the Turkish flag symbolically protect the tomb. Foreign Minister Davutoğlu promised retaliation after the tomb incident, despite the March 2014 attack on Niğde province by foreign fighters and multiple other attacks with Turkish borders.³³²

Turkey has been referred to as the “lone gatekeeper” as the Syrian and Iraqi governments crumble and are unable to conduct counterterrorism operations.³³³ Still, Turkish commentators view Turkey's Syria policy as a failed effort leaving Turkey with few options other than aligning with Western counterterrorism policies. At the time of publication, U.S. policy had shifted to reversing the gains of al-Qaeda and Islamist militant groups in Syria rather than overthrowing the regime and confronting the post-Assad vacuum. Consistent with the Sèvres Syndrome, Turkish policymakers fear Western intervention and point to the lack of Western support as the reason that radical groups are thriving. In line with Turkish perceptions of the global war on terror, policymakers believe they are not provided adequate Western support and as one Turkish official stated, “we do our best...Turkey cannot control this (alone).”³³⁴ NATO has pledged to defend and protect Turkey, but efforts remain short of full military defense. In an official

³³⁰ Quoted in Cengiz Çandar, “Turkey's failures in Iraq, Syria linked to Davutoglu,” *Al-Monitor*, June 13, 2014.

³³¹ Ibid.

³³² Ayla Albayrak, “Leaked YouTube Tapes Spotlight Turkish Tomb,” *Wall Street Journal*, March 28, 2014.

³³³ Nick Tattersall and Mariam Karouny, “Turkey struggles as ‘lone gatekeeper’ against Islamic State recruitment,” *Reuters*, August 26, 2014.

³³⁴ Nick Tattersall, “Al-Qaeda's rise in northern Syria leaves Turkey in a dilemma,” *Reuters*, October 17, 2013.

visit to Turkey, NATO Secretary-General Rasmussen highlighted the alliance's 2012 demonstration of solidarity through the deployment of Patriot missiles to defend its airspace from Syrian attacks. Turkey, however, has not asked for the activation of Article 5 of the NATO Treaty and continues to rely largely on rhetorical protections from its international allies.³³⁵

D. TURKEY AND THE GLOBAL WAR ON TERROR

As Turkey contributes to the American-led global war on terror, the Sèvres Syndrome remains relevant and influences its perception of terrorism and counterterrorism within Turkey.³³⁶ In the immediate aftermath of the 2001 terrorist attacks in New York City and Washington, DC, Turkey supported United Nations Security Council resolutions 1368 and 1373. As a NATO member, Turkey played a key role in the ISAF strikes on Taliban forces in Afghanistan. The Turkish Parliament's decision to bar NATO from using Turkish territory to open a northern front in Iraq surprised American policymakers and led to a crisis in U.S.-Turkish relations.³³⁷ As a partner in the global war on terror, Turkey had high expectations for international support against separatist terrorism within its borders. The United States had framed the global war on terror as an inclusive attack on all forms of terrorism—not limited to al-Qaeda. The realization that American support against the PKK would be limited has kindled conspiracy theories of a U.S.-sponsored “Greater Middle East Project” in the face of a crumbling Iraq.³³⁸

The inclusive nature of the global war on terror framework appeared to provide Turkey promising advances in its previously solitary struggle against the PKK. Turkish leaders sought to highlight that terrorism within Turkey did not begin in 2001 and Turkey has historically fought terrorism with little international support. In 2001, former foreign

³³⁵ Deniz Arslan, “Rasmussen Assures Turkey: NATO Won't Hesitate to Defend Its Ally,” *Today's Zaman*, June 17, 2014.

³³⁶ “Global war on terror” refers to the international military campaigns aimed to defeat al-Qaeda in the aftermath of the 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States.

³³⁷ Migdalovitz. *Iraq: Turkey, the Deployment of U.S. Forces, and Related Issues*.

³³⁸ Kaya, “A Different War on Terrorism,” *Long War Journal*.

minister İsmail Cem credits decades of Western misunderstandings and prejudices to Turkey's struggle with ethnic and separatist terrorism.³³⁹ In 2004, Prime Minister Erdoğan stated that "I am the prime minister of a country which has lost 40,000 victims to terror" highlights how the international community's selectivity on which groups to support is ironic.³⁴⁰ In a promising 2007 meeting between President Bush and Prime Minister Erdoğan at the White House, the leaders discussed their common goals for the global war on terror. President Bush proclaimed that the PKK was "an enemy of Turkey...an enemy of Iraq, and ...an enemy of the United States" and articulated the need to "protect ourselves from the PKK." Additionally, Prime Minister Erdoğan stressed that the United States was a strategic partner in both international terrorism and efforts to combat PKK terrorism.³⁴¹

Although the international community relentlessly pursued al-Qaeda on the global stage and the number of deaths from Islamic terrorism increased within Turkey, statements made by Turkish policymakers illustrate their belief that PKK terrorism still poses the greatest threat to Turkey's security.³⁴² At the 2004 NATO Summit in Istanbul, Erdoğan highlighted European barriers to labeling the PKK as a terrorist organization and the international community's lack of commitment to tackling PKK terrorism within Iraq. In July 2004, then-Foreign Minister Gül urged neighboring foreign ministers to strengthen efforts against "certain terrorist groups on Iraqi soil [that] constitute a threat to that country's neighbors."³⁴³

The global war on terror provided the united international front necessary to weaken religiously-motivated terrorism within Turkey; however, PKK violence continues essentially unabated. There was a brief uptick of international support after the 2003 Istanbul bombings, but overall support for PKK terrorism without al-Qaeda connections remained low. In 2003, the European Union issued a statement that reiterated "its

³³⁹ Quoted in Mango, *Turkey and the War on Terror*, 87.

³⁴⁰ Quoted in Ibid., 86.

³⁴¹ U.S. Department of State Archive, "President Bush and Prime Minister Tayyip Erdoğan Discuss Global War on Terror," Washington, DC, November 5, 2007.

³⁴² Mango, *Turkey and the War on Terror*, 78.

³⁴³ Ibid., 79.

solidarity with Turkey and reaffirms its determination to defeat terrorism together with others in the international community and to provide a common response to this global threat.”³⁴⁴ By 2004, the PKK and its affiliated organizations and the İBDA-C were added to the EU’s list of banned terrorist organizations. Despite these outward pronouncements, Turkey still had difficulty in extraditing suspected terrorists arrested abroad. Perceived as European support for Kurdish terrorism, Turkey was also unable to curtail European dissemination and funding of Kurdish-language media stations. The seeming unwillingness of the international community to make the full commitment to eradicating the PKK contributes to the perpetuation of the Sèvres Syndrome. Aliza Marcus aptly assessed, “the United States has said it is fighting a global war on terror, yet it refuses to fight the PKK.”³⁴⁵

As a continuation of the foreign policy trends highlighted in Chapter II, Turkish policymakers viewed the U.S. invasion of Iraq as the opening of another front in the Western conspiracy to weaken the territorial integrity of Iraq, sanction the creation of a Kurdish state, and strengthen the resolve of Kurdish nationalists in Turkey. Post-2003, Turkey saw an increase in PKK militants crossing the Iraqi-Turkish border and the number of weapons and explosives smuggled due to the crumbling political infrastructure in post-Hussein Iraq. Commander of the Turkish land forces, General Yaşar Büyükanıt, claimed that in 2005 there was the same number of PKK militants in Turkey as there had been at the time of Öcalan’s arrest.³⁴⁶ Turkey also feared that American reliance on Iraqi Kurds would legitimize their quest for an independent state that would spur domestic secessionist movements. Turkish mistrust grew after the “Suleimaniya” incident where U.S. troops detained and hooded Turkish Special Forces soldiers in Iraq based on faulty intelligence reports.³⁴⁷ Turkish policymakers pointed to American inability to prevent the activities of Kurdish militants in northern Iraq as Western unwillingness to fully combat the PKK in the global war on terror. American policymakers defended their

³⁴⁴ Quoted in Mango, *Turkey and the War on Terror*, 80.

³⁴⁵ Marcus, *Blood and Belief*, 304.

³⁴⁶ Mango, *Turkey and the War on Terror*, 74-77, 91.

³⁴⁷ Kaya, “A Different War on Terrorism,” *Long War Journal*.

unwillingness to target the PKK on the grounds that the PKK does not directly threaten U.S. interests.³⁴⁸ Turks, however, use rhetoric of the “U.S.” war on terror to fuel for conspiracy theories based on historic U.S. support for an independent Kurdish state.³⁴⁹ As American forces left Iraq in 2011 and Iraq is consumed by Islamic militant groups, Turkey fears that Iraq will be unable to consolidate and assert its sovereignty, allowing space for Kurdish nationalism and greater autonomy.

E. CONCLUSION

A true analysis of Turkey’s experience with twenty-first century terrorism cannot be fully presented with fresh developments emerging daily. As seen with the Islamic State, the transfer of territorial control is ongoing, alliances remain fluid, unintended consequences are still emerging, and Turkish perceptions are in limbo. PKK violence also continues with Kurdish groups taking advantage of the governance void in Syria and Iraq to establish strongholds. As PKK commits attacks in spite of the March 2013 ceasefire, the stakes rise for Ankara to secure lasting peace. Stalled diplomatic efforts increase the likelihood that the Turkish government will resort to deterrent counterterrorism policies rooted in early Republican perceptions of Kurdish revolts. The global war on terror also continues, with Turkey growing increasingly skeptical of Western commitments to combating terrorism that are incongruent with Turkish expectations. While none of these issues are fully resolved, the perceptions and rhetoric expressed by Turkish policymakers and commentators as these events unfold can be contextualized within the anxieties and perceptions that historically categorize terrorism within Turkey. The references to late Ottoman and early Republican views of nationalism and separatism illustrates that these experiences remain relevant and influence the reactions and responses to terrorism within Turkey and at its borders.

Although the terrorism threat from Syria still aggravates the Sèvres Syndrome, evidence exists that Turkish policymakers can overcome the tendency to perceive terrorism through the historical lens. One important sign that Turkey has moved away

³⁴⁸ Marcus, *Blood and Belief*, 304.

³⁴⁹ Aras and Toktaş, “Qaida, ‘War on Terror’ and Turkey,” 1044.

from voraciously defending its borders is the cultivation of economic and diplomatic spheres of influence. Turkey sends an estimated \$12 billion in annual exports to Iraq and Iraqi Kurdistan, providing an economic incentive to maintain relations and minimize disruptions from the Islamic State or Kurdish militants.³⁵⁰ Further, Turkey has opened negotiations directly with Iraq's Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) on an energy pipeline deal. Although no similar autonomous Kurdish government exists in Syria, this could serve as a template for relations with Syria's Kurds that focus more on shared economic interests than resolved historic territorial disputes. Some scholars have gone as far to connect these actions to a veiled attempt by Turkish policymakers to take advantage of the opportunity to "overthrow" the Sykes-Picot order, viewing these policies as a continuation of the Sèvres Syndrome.³⁵¹ Still, the economic linkages can help temper policymakers' perceptions and reduce the sustainability of the Sèvres Syndrome. In an environment with ongoing peace talks with the PKK and increased focus on diplomatic solutions, there is hope that pragmatism, not historic anxieties, can dominate.

³⁵⁰ Semih Idiz, "Turkey downplays IS threat, but concerns grow," *Al-Monitor*, August 8, 2014. Turks remember the impact of the \$50-60 billion lost in trade with Iraq during the Gulf War. See Bulent Aras, "Turkey's Iraqi dilemma," *Hürriyet Daily News*, December 5, 2002.

³⁵¹ Foreign Minister Davutoğlu has made multiple statements referring to the Sykes-Picot map in regards to Syria. See Pope, "Turkey's Tangled Syria Policy," 4-8.

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V. CONCLUSION

This thesis makes three assertions regarding the historical roots of terrorism within Turkey. First, I argue that Turkey's perceptions of terrorism are shaped by its historical experience of territorial loss and separatism embodied by the terms of the Treaty of Sèvres. Instead of delegating the treaty to a historical nuance that was superseded by a more favorable outcome, its emergence during the republic's formative years had a profound psychological impact on early Turkish leaders. These perceptions persist and have influenced multiple Turkish foreign policy decisions and reactions to territorial questions, developing into the "Sèvres Syndrome" featuring fear of territorial dismemberment and Western intervention in domestic affairs. Second, these late Ottoman and early Republican perceptions of irredentism and imperialism remained relevant and shaped policymakers' reactions to ASALA and PKK terrorism of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. Third, perceptions of terrorism remain rooted in the historical interpretations of dissent, nationalism, and separatism even as religiously-motivated terrorism from Kurdish Hizbollah, İBDA-C, al-Qaeda, and Islamic State gains prominence within Turkey.

This thesis places strong emphasis on rhetoric from Turkish politicians, parliamentarians, military leadership, media commentators, and security analysts in order to construct a narrative on Turkish perceptions of different types of terrorism from the 1970s onward. While focused mainly on Turkish policymakers' reactions through counterterrorism policies, future research should be devoted to the broader implications of the Sèvres Syndrome on Turkey's foreign policy. Turkey's choices of counterterrorism policies impact its foreign policy with Iraq, Syria, Armenia, the United States, European states, and others. Future research can also focus on contextualizing the Islamic State and religiously-motivated terrorism within Turkey as time from the events provides the space for more critical analysis.

There are significant implications of the historical framing on Turkey's ability to transcend terrorism. The Sèvres Syndrome has become ingrained in the political and social consciousness of Turkish policymakers, making repressive military

counterterrorism responses the first resort. Instead of evaluating the threat from each terrorist group within the contemporary realities, there is instead an imagined permanent threat of dismemberment. As Turkey strives to resolve the Kurdish issue in Turkey, instances of PKK violence continues to undermine Turkish efforts and has a negative effect on the Kurdish peace process in Turkey. If Turkey is perceived as not being serious to dismantling the Islamic State within its borders and Islamic State attacks on Kurds continue, this could ruin any gains made in the peace process.³⁵² This thesis illustrates that the Sèvres Syndrome is the basis of Turkish policymakers' reactions and operates as the critical variable preventing Turkey from fully eliminating PKK violence within its borders.

The Sèvres Syndrome also continues to undermine the relationship between minority communities within Turkey and the state. Original interpretations of Turkish nationalism and identity were based on territory and a common history, but the added ethnic nature evolved and was perceived to threaten the unity of fledgling state from inside its borders. Early leaders connected minority groups to separatism based on the Treaty of Sèvres, and ironically, contemporary leaders retain this relevance. Turkey continues to reference Sèvres as it redefines and reconstructs its social identity even though it is a century removed from the end of World War I and assuming its role as an aspiring regional leader. The inability to reconcile cultural rights for domestic minorities, Turkish perceptions of a unitary state, and separatist violence has also left Turkey's accession process to the European Union at a stalemate.

There are grounds for optimism that Turkey will be able to overcome the Sèvres Syndrome. However, some scholars contend that once ethnicity-based conflict arises, it initiates a cycle that is difficult to stop or reverse due to the reciprocal forces of violence.³⁵³ These forces would be difficult to oppose alone; Turkey has the added task of overcoming its historical legacy after years of this violence and politicization. Due to the Syndrome's pervasiveness in Turkish society, the basis of any lasting peace process

³⁵² Orhan Kemal Cengiz, "Turkey wakes up to Islamic State threat," *Al-Monitor*, August 6, 2014.

³⁵³ Ünal, *Counterterrorism in Turkey*, 165-7. Based on research from Paul Wilkinson, *Terrorism and the Liberal State* (London: Macmillan, 1977).

must conquer these widely accepted and ingrained historical anxieties. One Turkish journalist argues that “in order to ‘sell’ any peace model to the Turkish people, the government must persuade the people that a solution will not be the beginning of a disintegration process for Turkey.”³⁵⁴ One step in the right direction is that both Öcalan and AKP leaders have begun to frame territorial issues within a new lexicon of a “greater Turkey”; this expansion would encompass more of the land initially envisioned by the National Pact. This would be a win-win situation for both parties; the Kurds would gain their rights and Turkey would expand its borders and gain a larger leadership role in the region.³⁵⁵ While this is a “sellable” solution to overcome Turkey’s Sèvres Syndrome, the likelihood is very low since Turkey’s gain would encroach on the territorial sovereignty of its neighbors.

It is unlikely that the role of Sèvres will diminish in the near future; instead, Turkish policymakers must recognize that the Sèvres Syndrome is a cognitive predisposition when surveying contemporary security threats. The lens of Sèvres limits the suite of options Turkish policymakers consider as political and cultural rights are inherently viewed as concessions that threaten the unity and cohesion of the state. These views also undermine Turkish counterterrorism policies as responses to regional developments remain predicated on the desire to counter groups allied with Kurds and separatist groups rather than the group that inflict the most damage on Turkish interests.³⁵⁶ Only by transcending these anxieties and forceful assertions of sovereignty can Turkey achieve peace with its minority groups and implement a balanced domestic and foreign policy. The potency of religiously-motivated terrorism in the region is unlikely to change in the near future; Turkey policymakers instead have the power of choice.

³⁵⁴ İhsan Dağı, “To Build a ‘Greater Turkey’ with the Kurds,” *Today’s Zaman*, April 7, 2013.

³⁵⁵ Ibid.

³⁵⁶ Anthony Faiola and Souad Mekhennet, “In Turkey, a late crackdown on Islamist fighters,” *Washington Post*, August 12, 2014.

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